An Unrequited Love

BY MRS. SOUTHWORTH

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An Unrequited Love

A SEQUEL TO FOR WOMAN'S LOVE

By MRS. E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH

Author of

"Em," "Em's Husband," "Gloria," "David Lindsay,"
"The Bride's Ordeal," Etc.

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AN UNREQUITED LOVE

CHAPTER I

"A MAD MARRIAGE, MY MASTERS"

Rose Stillwater had had a trying day, followed by a night of wild dreams, and when she made her appearance at the breakfast table of old Aaron Rockharrt, the Iron King, there were heavy lines about her eyes and her lovely cheeks had not yet recovered their accustomed bloom.

Young Sylvanus Haught, fresh from West Point, burst upon the quiet breakfast party, bowed to his grandfather and Rose Stillwater and seized his married sister, Cora Rothsay, around the neck and covered her with kisses, all in a minute and before he spoke a word.

"Well, sir! You have got through," said the Iron King, with dignified gravity.

"Yes, sir, got through 'by the skin of my teeth,' as I might say! And got leave of absence, waiting my commission. Hurrah, Cora! Hurrah, the Rose that all admire! I shall be your cavalier for the next three months at least, and until they send me out to Fort Devil's Icy

Peak, to be killed and scalped by the redskins!" exclaimed the new-fledged soldier, throwing up his cap.

Soon Sylvanus was seated at the table, sharing the morning meal of his family.

"Now that my brother has joined us shall we leave for North End to-day, grandfather?" inquired Cora, as they all arose from breakfast.

"No; nor need you make any suggestions of the sort. When I am ready to go home, I will tell you. I have business to transact before I leave New York," gruffly replied the family bear.

Rose Stillwater took up one of the morning papers and ran her eyes down column after column, over page after page. Presently she came to the item she was so anxiously looking for:

"The Very Reverend the Dean of Olivet left the city last evening by the steamer Nighthawk for Boston."

With a sigh of relief she laid the paper down.

Mr. Rockharrt came and sat down beside her on the sofa, and began to speak to her in a low voice.

Sylvan, sitting by Cora at the other end of the apartment, began to tell all about the exercises at West Point which she had missed. His voice, though not loud, was clear and lively, and quite drowned the sound of Mr. Rockharrt and Mrs. Stillwater's words, which Cora could see were earnest and important. At last Rose got up in some agitation and hurried out of the room. Then old Aaron Rockharrt came up to the young people and stood before them. There was something so ominous

in his attitude and expression that his two grandchildren looked dismayed even before he spoke.

"Sir and madam," he said, addressing the young creatures as if they were dignitaries of the church or state, "I have to inform you that I am about to marry Mrs. Stillwater. The ceremony will be performed at the church to-morrow noon. I shall expect you both to attend us there as witnesses."

Saying which the Iron King arose and strode out of the room.

The sister and brother lifted their eyes, and might have stared each other out of countenance in their silent, unutterable consternation.

Sylvan was the first to find his voice.

"Cora! It is an outrage! It is worse! It is an infamy!" he exclaimed, as the blood rushed to his face and crimsoned it.

Cora said never a word, but burst into tears and sobbed aloud.

"Cora! don't cry! You have me now! Oh, the old man is certainly mad and ought to be looked after. Cora, darling, don't take it so to heart! At his age, too; seventy-seven! He'll make himself the laughing stock of the world! Oh, Cora, don't grieve so! It does not matter after all! Such a disgrace to the family! Oh, come now, you know, Cora! this is not the way to welcome a fellow home! For any old man to make such a—— Oh, I say, Cora! come out of that now! If you don't, I swear I will take my hat and go out to get a drink!"

"Oh, don't! don't!" gasped his sister; "don't you lend a hand to breaking my heart."

"Well, I won't, darling, if you'll only come out of that! It is not worth so much grief."

"I will—stop—as soon as—I can!" sobbed the young woman, "but when I think—of his reverent gray hairs —brought to such dishonor—by a mere adventuress— and we—so powerless—to prevent it, I feel as if—I should die."

"Oh, nonsense; you look at it too gravely. Besides, old men have married beautiful young women before now!" said Sylvan, troubled by his sister's grief, and tacking around in his opinions as deftly as ever did any other politician.

"Yes, and got themselves laughed at and ridiculed for their folly!" sighed Cora, who had ceased to sob.

"Behind their backs, and that did not hurt them one bit."

"Oh, if Uncle Fabian were only here!"

"Why, what could he do to prevent the marriage?"

"I do not know. But I know this, that if any man could prevent this degradation, he would be Uncle Fabian! It would be no use, I fear, to telegraph to Clarence!"

"Clarence!" said Sylvanus with a laugh. "Why he has no more influence with the Iron King than I have. His father calls him an idiot and he certainly is weakly amiable. He would back his father in anything the old man had set his heart upon. But, Cora, listen here, my

dear! You and I are free at present. We need not countenance this marriage by our presence. I, your brother, can take you to another hotel, or take you off to Saratoga, where we can stay until I get my orders, and then you can go with me wherever I go. There! the Devil's Icy Peak itself will be a holier home than Rockhold for you."

Cora had become quite calm by this time, and she answered quietly:

"No; you misapprehend me, Sylvan. It was not from indignation or resentment that I cried, and not at all for myself. I grieved for him, the spellbound old man! No, Sylvanus; since we feel assured that no power of ours, no power on earth, can turn him from his purpose, we must do our duty by him. We must refrain from giving him pain or making him angry; for his own poor old sake, we must do this! Sylvan, I must attend his bride to the altar; and you must attend him—as he desired us to do."

"'Desired'! by Jove, I think he commanded! I do not remember ever to have heard his Majesty the King of the Cumberland Mines request anybody to do anything in the whole course of his life. He always ordered him to do it! Well, Cora dear, I will be 'best' man to the bridegroom since you say so! I have always obeyed you, Cora. Ah! you have trained me for the model of an obedient husband for some girl, Cora! Now, I am going downstairs to smoke a cigar. You

don't object to that, I hope, Mrs. Rothsay?" lightly inquired the youth as he sauntered out of the room.

He had just closed the door when Mrs. Stillwater entered.

She came in very softly, crossed the room, sat down on the sofa beside Cora, and slipped her arm around the lady's waist, purring and cooing:

"I have been waiting to find you alone, dearest. I just heard your brother go downstairs. Mr. Rockharrt has told you, dear?"

"Yes; he has told me. Take your arms away from me, if you please, Mrs. Stillwater, and pray do not touch me again," quietly replied the young lady, gently withdrawing herself from the siren's close embrace.

"You are displeased with me. Can you not forgive me, then?" pleaded Rose, withdrawing her arms, but fixing her soft blue eyes pleadingly upon the lady's face.

"You have given me no personal offense, Mrs. Stillwater."

"Cora, dear——" began Rose.

"Mrs. Rothsay, if you please," said Cora, in a quiet tone.

"Mrs. Rothsay, then," amended Rose, in a calm voice, as if determined not to take offense. "Mrs. Rothsay, allow me to explain how all this came to pass. I have always, from the time I first lived in his house, felt a profound respect and affection for your grandfather——"

"Mr. Rockharrt, if you please," said Cora.

"For Mr. Rockharrt, then, as well as for his sainted wife, the late Mrs. Rockharrt. I——"

"Madam!" interrupted Cora, "is there nothing too holy to be profaned by your lips? You should at least have the good taste to leave that lady's sacred memory alone."

"Certainly, if you wish; but she was a good friend to me, and I served her with a daughter's love and devotion. In my last visit to Rockhold I also served Mr. Rockharrt more zealously than ever, because, indeed, he needed such affectionate service more than before. He has grown so much accustomed to my services that they now seem vitally necessary to him. But, of course, I cannot take care of him day and night, in parlor and chamber, unless I become his wife—'the Abisheg of his age.' And so, Cora, dear—I beg pardon—Mrs. Roth-say, I have yielded to his pleadings and consented to marry him."

"Mr. Rockharrt has already told me so," coldly replied Cora.

"And, dear, I wish to add this—that the marriage need make no difference in our domestic relations at Rockhold."

"I do not understand you."

"I mean in the family circle."

"Oh! thank you," said Cora, with the nearest approach to a sneer that ever she made. "I have heard all you have to say, Mrs. Stillwater, and now I have to reply—First, that I give you no credit for any respect

or affection that you may profess for Mr. Rockharrt, or for disinterested motives in marrying the aged millionaire."

"Oh, Cora—Mrs. Rothsay!"

"I will say no more on that point. Mr. Rockharrt is old and worn with many business cares. I would not willingly pain or anger him. Therefore, because he wills it, for his sake, not for yours, I will attend you to the altar. Also, if he should desire me to do so, I shall remain at Rockhold until the return of Mr. Fabian Rockharrt."

At the sound of this name Rose Stillwater winced and shivered.

"Then, knowing that his favorite son will be near him, I shall leave him with the freer heart and go away with my brother, whithersoever he may be sent. Mr. Fabian is expected to return within a few weeks, and will probably be here long before my brother receives his orders. Now, Mrs. Stillwater, I think all has been said between us, and you will please excuse my leaving you," said Cora, as she arose and withdrew from the room.

Then Rose Stillwater lost her self-command. Her blue eyes blazed, she set her teeth, she doubled her fist, and shaking it after the vanished form of the lady, she hissed:

"Very well, proud madam! I'll pay you for all this. You shall never touch one cent of old Aaron Rockharrt's millions!"

Having launched this threat, she got up and went to her room. Ten minutes later she drove out in a carriage alone. She did not return to luncheon. Neither did Mr. Rockharrt, who had gone down to Wall Street. Sylvan and Cora lunched alone, and spent the afternoon together in the parlor, for they had much to say to each other after their long separation, and much also to say of the impending marriage. During that afternoon many packages and bandboxes came by vans, directed to Mrs. Rose Stillwater. These were sent to her apartment. At dusk Mrs. Stillwater returned and went directly to her room. She probably did not care to face the brother and sister together, unsupported by their grandfather. A few minutes later Mr. Rockharrt came in, looking moody and defiant, as if quite conscious of the absurdity of his position, or ready to crush any one who betrayed the slightest sense of humor. Then dinner was served, and Rose Stillwater came out of her room and entered the parlor—a vision of loveliness—her widow's weeds all gone, her dress a violet brocaded satin, with fine lace berthe and sleeve trimmings, white throat and white arms encircled with a pearl necklace and bracelets; golden red hair dressed high and adorned with a pearl comb. She came in smiling and took her place at the table.

Old Aaron Rockharrt looked up at her in surprise and not altogether with pleasure. Rose Stillwater, seeing his expression of countenance, got a new insight into the mind of the old man whom she had thought she

knew so well. During dinner, to cover the embarrassment which covered each member of the small party, Sylvan began to talk of the cadets' ball at West Point on the preceding evening; the distinguished men who were present, the pretty girls with whom he had danced, the best waltzers, and so forth, and then the mischievous scamp added:

"But there wasn't a brunette present as handsome as my sister Cora, nor a blonde as beautiful as my own grandmamma-elect."

When they all left the table, Mrs. Stillwater went to her room, and Mr. Rockharrt took occasion to say:

"I wish you both to understand the program for to-morrow. There is to be no fuss, no wedding breakfast, no nonsense whatever."

Sylvan thought to himself that the marriage alone was nonsense enough to stand by itself, like a velvet dress, which is spoiled by additions; but he said nothing. Mr. Rockharrt, standing on the rug with his back to the mantelpiece and his hands clasped behind him, continued:

"Sylvan, you will wear a morning suit; Cora, you will wear a visiting costume, just what you would wear to an ordinary church service. Rose will be married in her traveling dress. Immediately after the ceremony we, myself and wife, shall enter a carriage and drive to the railway depot and take the train for Niagara. You two can return here or go to Rockhold or wherever you will. We shall make a short tour of the Falls, lakes,

St. Lawrence River, and so on, and probably return to Rockhold by the first of July. I cannot remain long from the works while Fabian is away. Now, am I clearly understood?"

"Very clearly, sir," replied Sylvan, speaking for himself and sister.

"Then, good-night; I am going to bed," said the Iron King, and without waiting for a response, he strode out of the room.

"Who ever heard of a man dictating to a woman what she shall wear?" exclaimed Cora.

Sylvan laughed.

"Why, the King of the Cumberland mines would dictate when you should rise from your seat and walk across the room; when you should sit down again; when you should look out of the window, and every movement of your life, if it were not too much trouble. Good-night, Cora."

The brother and sister shook hands and parted for the night, each going to his or her respective apartment. Early the next morning the little party met at breakfast. The Iron King looked sullen and defiant, as if he were challenging the whole world to find any objection to his remarkable marriage at their peril. Mrs. Stillwater, in a pretty morning robe of pale blue sarcenet, made very plainly, looked shy, humble, and deprecating, as if begging from all present a charitable construction of her motives and actions. Cora Rothsay looked calm and cold in her usual widow's dress and cap.

Sylvan seemed the only cheerful member of the party and tried to make conversation out of such trifles as the bill of fare furnished. All were relieved when the party separated and went to their rooms to dress for church. At eleven o'clock they reassembled in the parlor. Mr. Rockharrt wore a new morning suit. He might have been going down to Wall Street instead of to his own wedding. Rose Stillwater wore a navy blue lusterless silk traveling dress, with hat, veil and gloves to match, all very plain, but extremely becoming to her fresh complexion and ruddy hair. Cora wore her widow's dress of lusterless black silk with mantle, bonnet, veil and gloves to match. Sylvan, like his grandfather, wore a plain morning suit.

"Well, are you all ready?" demanded old Aaron, looking critically upon the party.

"All ready, sir," chirped Sylvan for the others.

"Come, then."

And the aged bridegroom drew the arm of his bride-elect within his own and led the way downstairs and out to the handsome carriage that stood waiting.

He handed her in, put her on the back seat and placed himself beside her.

Sylvan helped his sister into the carriage and followed her. They seated themselves on the front seat opposite the bridal pair.

And the carriage drove off.

"Oh!" suddenly exclaimed old Aaron Rockharrt, rummaging in the breast pocket of his coat and drawing

thence a white envelope and handing it to Sylvan, "here take this and give it to the minister as soon as we come before him."

The young man received the packet and looked inquiringly at the elder. It was really the marriage fee for the officiating clergyman, and a very ostentatious one also; but the Iron King did not condescend to explain anything. He had given it to his grandson with his orders, which he expected to be implicitly obeyed without question. They reached the church, the same church in which they had heard the dean preach on the previous Sunday. They alighted from the carriage and entered the building, old Aaron Rockharrt leading the way with his bride-elect on his arm, Sylvan and Cora following. The church was vacant of all except the minister, who stood in his surplice behind the chancel railing, and the sexton who had opened the door for the party, and was now walking before them up the aisle.

The church was empty, because this, though the wedding of a millionaire, was one of which it might be said that there was "No feast, no cake, no cards, no nothing."

The party reached the altar railing, bowed silently to the minister, who nodded gravely in return, and then formed before the altar—the venerable bridegroom and beautiful bride in the center, Sylvan on the right of the groom, Cora on the left of the bride. The young man performed the mission with which he had been intrusted, and then the ceremony was commenced. It

went on smoothly enough until the minister in its proper place asked the question:

"Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?"

There was an awful pause.

No one had thought of the necessity of having a "church father" to give away the bride.

The officiating clergyman saw the dilemma at a glance, and quietly beckoned the gray-haired sexton to come up and act as a substitute. But Sylvan Haught, with a twinkle of fun in his eyes, turned his head and whispered to the newcomer:

" 'After me is manners of you.' "

Then he took the bride's hand and said mightily:

"I do."

The marriage ceremony went on to its end and was over. Congratulations were offered. The register was signed and witnessed.

And old Aaron Rockharrt led his newly married wife out of the church and put her into the carriage. Then turning around to his grandchildren he said:

"You can walk back to the hotel. See that the porters send off our luggage by express to the Cataract House, Niagara Falls. They have their orders from me, but do you see that these orders are promptly obeyed. Now, good-by."

He shook hands with Sylvan and Cora, and entered the carriage, which immediately rolled off in the direction of the railway station.

The brother and sister walked back to the hotel together.

"It will be a curious study, Cora, to see who will rule in this new firm. I believe it is universally conceded that when an old man marries a pretty young wife, he becomes her slave. But our honored grandfather has been absolute monarch so long that I doubt if he can be reduced to servitude."

"I have no doubts on the subject," replied his sister.

"I have been watching them. He is not subjugated by Rose. He is not foolishly in love with her, at his age. He likes her as he likes other agreeable accessories for his own sake. I have neither respect nor affection for Rose, yet I feel some compassion for her now. Whatever the drudgery of her life as governess may have been since she left us, long ago, it has been nothing, nothing to the penal servitude of the life upon which she has now entered. The hardest-worked governess, seamstress, or servant has some hours in the twenty-four, and some nook in the house that she can call her own where she can rest and be quiet. But Rose Rockharrt will have no such relief! Do I not remember my dear grandmother's life? And my grandfather really did love her, if he ever loved any one on earth. This misguided young woman fondly hopes to be the ideal old man's darling. She deceives herself. She will be his slave, by day and night seldom out of his sight, never out of his service and surveillance. Possibly—

for she is not a woman of principle—she may end by running away from her master, and that before long."

Cora's last words brought them to the "Ladies' Entrance" of their hotel.

"Go upstairs, Cora, and I will step into the office and see if there are any letters," said Sylvan.

Mrs. Rothsay went up into their private sitting room, dropped into a chair, took off her bonnet and began to fan herself, for her midday walk had been a very warm one.

Presently Sylvan came up with a letter in his hand.

"For you, Cora, from Uncle Fabian! There is a foreign mail just in."

"Give it to me."

Sylvan handed her the letter. Cora opened it, glanced over it, and exclaimed:

"Uncle Fabian says that he will be home the last of this month."

CHAPTER II

A CRISIS AT ROCKHOLD

Brother and sister went to Newport and spent a month. The Dean of Olivet was in the town, but they never met him because they never went into society. Toward the last of June, Corona proposed that they should go at once to Rockhold.

The next morning brother and sister took the early train for New York. On the morning of the second day they took the express train for Baltimore, where they stopped for another night. And on the morning of the third day they took the early train for North End, where they arrived at sunset. They went to the hotel to get dinner and to engage the one hack of the establishment to take them to Rockhold.

Almost the first man they met on the hotel porch was Mr. Clarence, who rushed to meet them.

"Hurrah, Sylvan! Hurrah, old boy! Back again! Why didn't you write or telegraph? How do you do, Cora! Ah! when will you get your roses back, my dear? And how is his Majesty? Why is he not with you? Where did you leave him?" demanded Mr. Clar-

ence in a gale of high spirits at greeting his nephew and niece again.

"He is among the Thousand Islands somewhere with his bride," answered Cora.

"His—what?" inquired Mr. Clarence, with a puzzled air.

"His wife," said Cora.

"His wife? What on earth are you talking about, Cora? You could not have understood my question. I asked you where my father was!" said the bewildered Mr. Clarence.

"And I told you that he is on his wedding trip with his bride, among the Thousand Islands," replied Cora.

Mr. Clarence turned in a helpless manner.

"Sylvan," he said, "tell me what she means, will you?"

"Why, just what she says. Our grandfather and grandmother are on the St. Lawrence, but will be home on the first of July," Sylvan explained.

But Mr. Clarence looked from the brother to the sister and back again in the utmost perplexity.

"What sort of a stupid joke are you two trying to get off?" he inquired.

They had by this time reached the public parlor of the hotel and found seats.

"Is it possible, Uncle Clarence, that you do not know Mr. Rockharrt was married on the thirty-first of last month in New York to Mrs. Stillwater?" inquired Cora.

"What! My father!"

"Why should you be amazed or incredulous, Uncle Clarence? The incomprehensible feature, to my mind, is that you should not have heard of the affair directly from grandfather himself. Has he really not written and told you of his marriage?"

"He has never told me a word of his marriage, though he has written a dozen or more letters to me within the last few weeks."

"That is very extraordinary. And did you not hear any rumor of it? Did no one chance to see the notice of it in the papers?"

"No one that I know of. No; I heard no hint of my father's marriage from any quarter, nor had I, nor any one else at Rockhold or at North End, the slightest suspicion of such a thing."

"That is very strange. It must have been in the papers," said Sylvan.

"If it was I did not see it, but, then, I never think of looking at the marriage list."

"I am inclined to think that it never got into the papers. The marriage was private, though not secret. And you, Sylvan, should have seen that the marriage was inserted in all the daily papers. It was your special duty as groomsman. But you must have forgotten it, and I never remembered to remind you of it," said Cora.

"Not I. I never forgot it, because I never once thought of it. Didn't know it was my duty to attend to it. Besides I had so many duties. Such awful duties. Think of my having to be my own grandmother's church

papa and give her away at the altar! That duty reduced me to a state of imbecility from which I have not yet recovered."

"But," said Mr. Clarence, with a look of pain on his fine, genial countenance, "it is so strange that my father never mentioned his marriage in any of his letters to me."

"Perhaps he did not like to mix up sentiment with business," kindly suggested Sylvan.

"I don't think it was a question of sentiment," sighed Mr. Clarence.

"What? Not his marriage?"

"No," sighed Mr. Clarence.

"Well, don't worry about the matter. Let us order dinner and engage the carriage to take us all to Rockhold. How astonished the darkies will be to see us, and how much more astonished to hear the news we have to tell! I wonder if they will take kindly to the rule of the new mistress?" said Sylvan.

"Why did not one of you have the kindness, and thoughtfulness to write and tell me of my father's marriage?" sorrowfully inquired Mr. Clarence, utterly ignoring the just spoken words of his nephew.

"Dear Uncle Clarence, I should certainly have written and told you all about it at once, if I had not taken for granted that grandfather had informed you of his intention, as was certainly his place to do. And even if I had written to you on any other occasion, I should

assuredly have alluded to the marriage. But, you see, I never wrote to any one while away," Cora explained.

"Now, Uncle Clarence, just take Cora's explanation and apology for both of us, will you, for it fits me as well as it does her. And now you two may keep the ball rolling, while I go out and order dinner and engage the hack," said Sylvan, starting for the office.

When he was gone Clarence asked Cora to give him all the details of the extraordinary marriage, and she complied with his request.

"It will make the country talk," said the young man, with a sigh, which Cora echoed.

"And you say they will be home on the first of July?" he inquired.

"Yes," said Cora.

"I wish I had known in time. I would have had old Rockhold Hall prepared as it should be for the reception of my father's bride, though I do so strongly disapprove the marriage. Do you know, Cora, that old house has never had its furniture renewed within my memory? Some of the rooms are positively moldy and musty. And whoever heard of a wealthy man like my father bringing his wife home to a neglected old country house like Rockhold, without first having it renovated and refurnished?"

"I do not believe he ever once thought of the propriety or necessity of repairing and refitting. His mind is quite absorbed in his new and vast speculations. He

spent every day down in Wall Street while we stayed in New York City."

"Well, Corona, this is the twenty-eighth of June, and we have four days before us; for I do not suppose the newly-married pair will arrive before the evening of the first of July; so we must do the best we can, my dear, to make the house pleasant in this short time."

"And Uncle Fabian and his wife will be at Rockhold about the same time," added Cora.

"I knew Fabian would be at North End on the first of July, but I did not know that he would go on to Rockhold. I thought he would go on to their new house. So we shall have two brides to welcome, instead of one."

"Yes. And now, Uncle Clarence, will you please ring for the chambermaid? I must go to a bedroom and get some of this railroad dust out of my eyes," said Cora.

At nine o'clock in the very warm evening, the three were sitting near the open windows, when they started at the sound of a hearty, genial voice in the adjoining room, inquiring for accommodations for the night.

"It is Fabian!" cried Mr. Clarence, springing up in joy and rushing out of the room to welcome his only and much beloved brother.

The glad voices of the two brothers in greeting reached their ears, and a moment after the door was thrown open again, and Mr. Clarence entered, conducting Mr. and Mrs. Fabian Rockharrt.

As soon as they found themselves alone, the two brothers took convenient seats to have a talk.

"How goes on the works, Clarence?" inquired Mr. Fabian.

"Very prosperously. You will go through them to-morrow and see for yourself."

"And how goes on the great scheme?"

"Even better than the works. Last reports shares selling at one hundred and thirty."

"Same over yonder. When I left Amsterdam shares selling like hot cakes at a hundred and thirty-one seven-tenths. How is the governor?" inquired Mr. Fabian.

"As flourishing as a successful financier and septuagenarian bridegroom can be."

"Why! what do you mean?"

"Haven't you heard the news?"

"What is it? You—you don't mean——"

"Has our father written nothing to you of a very important and utterly unexpected act of his life?"

"No."

"I advised him to marry——"

"You! You! Fabian! You advised our father to do such an absurd thing at his age?"

"I confess I don't see the absurdity of it," quietly replied the elder brother.

"Oh, why did you counsel him to such an act?" inquired Mr. Clarence, more in sorrow than in anger.

"Out of pure good nature. I was getting married myself and wanted everybody to be as happy as I was

myself, particularly my old father. Now I wonder he did not write to me of his happiness; but perhaps he has done so and the letter passed me on the sea. When did this marriage take place?"

"On the last day of May."

"Whe-ew! Then there was ample time in which to have written the news to me. And I have had at least half a dozen business letters since the date of his marriage, in any of which he might have mentioned the occurrence had he so chosen. The lady is no longer young. She must be forty-eight, and she is handsome, cultured, dignified and of very high rank. A queenly woman!"

"Do you know whom you are talking about, Fabian?"

"Mrs. Bloomingfield, the lady I recommended, whom father married."

"Oh, indeed; I thought you didn't know what you were talking about or whom you were talking of," said Mr. Clarence.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Our father never accepted your recommendation; never proposed to the handsome, high-spirited Mrs. Bloomingfield."

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Fabian. "Whom, then?"

"Whom? Whom should he have selected but

'The Rose that all ad-mi-r-r?'

"Clarence, what, in the fiend's name, do you mean?

Whom has my father married?" demanded Mr. Fabian, starting up and staring at his younger brother.

"Mrs. Rose Flowers Stillwater," replied Mr. Clarence, staring back.

Mr. Fabian dropped back in his chair, while every vestige of color left his face.

"Why, Fabian! Fabian! Why should you care so much as all this? Speak, Fabian; what is the matter?" inquired the younger brother, rising and bending over the elder.

"What is the matter?" cried Mr. Fabian, excitedly. "Ruin is the matter! Ruin, disgrace, dishonor, degradation, an abyss of infamy; that is the matter."

"Oh, come now! see here! that is all wild talk. The young woman was only a nursery governess, to be sure, in our house, and then widow of some skipper or other; but she was respectable, though of humble position."

"Clarence, hush! You know nothing about it!" exclaimed Mr. Fabian, wiping his forehead with his handkerchief, and then getting up and walking the floor with rapid strides.

"I don't understand all this, Fabian. We were all of us a good deal cut up by the event, but nothing like this!" said Mr. Clarence, uneasily.

"No; you don't understand. But listen to me: I was on my way to Rockhold to join in the family reunion, and to show the old homestead to my wife; but I cannot take her there now. I cannot introduce her to the new Mrs. Rockharrt—the new Mrs. Rockharrt!"

he repeated, in a tone and with a gesture of disgust and abhorrence. "I shall turn back, and take my wife to our new home; and when I go to Rockhold I shall go alone."

"Fabian, you make me dreadfully uneasy. What do you know of Rose Stillwater that is to her discredit?" demanded Clarence Rockharrt.

His elder brother paused in his excited walk, dropped his head upon his chest and reflected for a few moments. Then he seemed to recover some degree of self-control and self-recollection. He returned to his chair, sat down, and said:

"Of my own personal knowledge. I know nothing against the woman but just this—that she is but half educated, deceitful and unreliable. And that knowledge I gained by experience after she had first left Rockhold, to which I had first introduced her for a governess to our niece. I had nothing to do with her return to the old hall, and would have never countenanced such a proceeding if I had been in the country."

"That is all very deplorable, but yet it hardly warrants your very strong language, Fabian. I am sorry that you have discovered her to be 'ignorant, deceitful and unreliable,' but let us hope that now, when she is placed above temptation, she will reform. Don't take exaggerated views of affairs, Fabian."

The elder man was growing calmer and more thoughtful. Presently he said:

"You are right, Clarence. My indignation, on learn-

ing that that woman had succeeded in trapping our Iron King, led me into extravagant language on the subject. Forget it, Clarence. And whatever you do, my brother, drop no hint to any one of what I have said to you to-night, lest our father should hear of it; for if he should——"

Mr. Fabian paused.

"I shall never drop a hint that might possibly give our father one moment of uneasiness. Be sure of that, Fabian."

"That is good, my brother! And we will agree to ignore all faults in our young stepmother, and for our father's sake treat her with all proper respect."

"Of course. I could not do otherwise. And, Fabian, I hope you will reconsider the matter, and bring Violet to Rockhold to join our family reunion."

"No, Clarence," said the elder brother; "there is just where I must draw the line. I cannot introduce my wife to the new Mrs. Rockharrt."

"But it seems to me that you are very fastidious, Fabian. Do you expect always to be able to keep Violet from meeting with 'ignorant, insincere and unreliable' people, in a world like this?" inquired Mr. Clarence, significantly.

"No, not entirely, perhaps; yet, so far as in me lies, I will try to keep my simple wood violet 'unspotted from the world,'" replied Mr. Fabian, who, untruthful and dishonest as he was in heart and life, yet reverenced

while he wondered at the purity and simplicity of his young wife's nature.

"I am afraid the pater will feel the absence of Violet as a slight to his bride," said Mr. Clarence.

"No, I shall take care that he does not. Violet is in very delicate health, and that must be her excuse for staying at home."

The brothers talked on for a little while longer; and then, when they had exhausted the subject for the time being, Mr. Clarence said he would go and look up Sylvan, and he went out for the purpose. Fabian Rockharrt, left alone, resumed his disturbed walk up and down the room, muttering to himself:

"The traitress! the unprincipled traitress! How dared she do such a deed? Didn't she know that I could expose her, and have her cast forth in ignominy from my father's house? Or did she venture all in the hope that consideration of my father's age and position in the world would shut my mouth and stay my hand? She is mistaken, the jade! Unless she falls into my plans, and works for my interest, she shall be exposed and degraded from her present position."

Mr. Fabian was interrupted by the re-entrance of Mrs. Rothsay. He turned to meet her and inquired:

"Where did you leave Violet, my dear?"

"She is in her own room, which is next to mine. I went in with her and saw her to bed, and waited until she went to sleep," replied Cora.

"Poor little one! She is very fragile, and has been

been very much fatigued. I do not think, my dear, that I can take her on to Rockhold to-morrow. I think I must let her rest here for a day or two."

"It would be best, not only on account of Violet's delicacy and weariness, but also on account of the condition of the house at Rockhold, which has not been opened or aired for months."

"That is true; though I had not thought of it before," said Mr. Fabian, who was well pleased that Cora so readily fell in with his plans.

"What do you think of the pater's marriage, Cora?" he next inquired.

"I would rather not give an opinion, Uncle Fabian," she answered.

"Then I am equally well answered, for that is giving a very strong opinion!" he exclaimed.

"The deed is done and cannot be undone!"

"Can it not? Perhaps it can!"

"What do you mean, Uncle Fabian?"

"Nothing that you need trouble yourself about, my dear. But tell me this—what do you mean to do, Cora? Do you mean to stay on at Rockhold?"

"I suppose I must do so."

"Not at all, if you do not like! You are an independent widow and may go where you please."

"I know that and wish to go; but I do not wish to make a scene or cause a scandal by leaving my grandfather's protection so suddenly after his marriage, which is open enough to criticism, as it is. So I must stay on

at Rockhold so long as Sylvan's leave shall last, and until he shall receive his commission and orders. Then I will go with him wherever his duty may call him."

"Good girl! You have decided well and wisely. Though the post of duty to which the callow lieutenantling will be ordered must, of course, be Fort Jumping Off Point, at the extreme end of the habitable globe. Well, my dear, I must bid you good-night, for, see, it is on the stroke of eleven o'clock, and I am rather tired from my journey, for, you must know, we rushed it through from New York to North End without lying over," said Mr. Fabian, as he shook hands with his niece.

He retired, and his example was soon followed by all his party.

CHAPTER III

A FAMILY REUNION

THE next morning, after an early breakfast, the travelers assembled in the hall of the hotel to take leave of each other. Clarence, Sylvan, and Cora entered the capacious carriage of the establishment to drive to Rockhold, leaving Mr. and Mrs. Fabian Rockharrt on the porch of the hotel, at which they had decided to rest for a few days.

"We shall go to Rockhold to welcome the king and queen when they return, Cora," said Mr. Fabian, waving his hand to the departed trio, though he had not the least intention of keeping his word. He then led his pretty Violet into the house. The lumbering carriage rolled along the village street, passed the huge buildings of the locomotive works, and out into the road that lay between the foot of the range of mountains and the banks of the river.

The ferryboat was at the wharf, and the broad-shouldered negro dwarf was standing on it, pole in hand.

His look of surprise and delight on seeing Sylvan and Cora was good to behold.

"Why, Lors bress my po' ole soul, young marse an'

miss, is yer come sure 'nough? 'Deed, I's moughty proud to see yer. How's de ole marse? When he coming back agin?" he queried, as the carriage rolled slowly across the gangplank from the wharf to the deck of the ferryboat.

"Your ole marse is quite well, Uncle Moses, and will be home on the first of the month with his new wife," said Sylvan, who could not miss the fun of telling this rare bit of news to the aged ferryman.

The old negro dropped his pole into the water, opened his mouth and eyes to their widest extent and gasped and stared.

"Wid—w'ich?" he said, at last.

"With his new wife and your new mistress," answered Sylvan.

The old negro dropped his chin on his chest, raised his knobby black fingers to his head and scratched his gray hair with a look of quaint perplexity, as he muttered.

"Now I wunner ef I tuk too heavy a pull on to dat dar rum jug, fo' I lef' de house dis mornin'—I wunner if I did?"

His mate stopped and pulled the pole up out of the water and began himself to push off the boat until it was afloat.

They soon reached the opposite shore, drove off the boat and up the avenue between the flowering locust trees that formed a long, green, fragrant arch above their heads, and so on to the gray old house. In a very

few moments the door was opened and all the household servants appeared to welcome the returning party. Most of them looked more frightened than pleased; but when anxious glances toward the group leaving the carriage assured them that the family "Boodlejock" was not present, they seemed relieved and delighted to see the others.

With the easy, respectful familiarity of long and faithful service, the negro men and women crowded around the entering party with loving greetings.

The news of the Iron King's marriage was told by Sylvan. Had a bombshell fallen and exploded among the servants, they could not have been more shocked. There was a simultaneous exclamation of surprise and dismay, and then total silence.

At the end of the third day all was ready for the reception of Mr. and Mrs. Rockharrt.

The next day was the first of July. As soon as Mr. Clarence reached his private office at the works he found a telegram waiting him. He opened it, and read the following:

CAPON SPRINGS, July 1, 18—.

Shall reach North End by the 6 P. M. train. Send the carriage to meet that train. Shall go directly to Rockhold. Order dinner there for 8 P. M.

AARON ROCKHARRT.

Mr. Clarence put a boy on horseback and sent him on to Cora, with this message inclosed in a note from him-

self. And then he gave his attention to the duties of his office. He was still busy at his desk when Mr. Fabian strolled in.

"Well, old man, good-morning. I return to duty today, because it is the first of the month, you know."

"And also the first of the financial year. There has been so much to do within the last few days, I am glad you have returned to your post. I would like the pater to find all right when he comes to inspect. By the way, I have just got a telegram from him. I have just sent it off to Cora, so that she may know when to send the carriage, and for what hour to order dinner. You know it would never do to have anything 'gang aglee' in which the pater is interested."

"No. Well, you and I must go to meet him. We must not fail in any attention to the old gentleman."

"Of course not. Oh! what will the people say when they hear the news? I do not think that the slightest rumor of the mad marriage has got out. I know that I have not breathed it."

"Nor I. But of course it will be generally known within twenty-four hours; and then I hope the pater will do the handsome thing and give his workmen a general holiday and jollification."

"I doubt it, since he has not even refurnished the shabby old drawing room at Rockhold in honor of the occasion," said Mr. Clarence.

Then the brothers separated for the day.

Whenever the family traveling carriage happened to

be sent from Rockhold to the North End railway depot, it always stopped at the North End Hotel to rest and water the horses. So when the afternoon waned, as Messrs. Fabian and Clarence Rockharrt had to remain busy in their respective offices up to the last possible minute, Sylvan was stationed on the front porch of the hotel, with the day's newspapers and a case of cigars to solace him while watching for the carriage.

It came at a quarter to five o'clock, and while the horses were resting and feeding, Sylvan sent a messenger to summon his two uncles. By the time the two horses were ready to start again, the two men came up and entered the carriage. Sylvan followed them in.

"See here, my boy," said Mr. Fabian, "you can't go, you know. There will be no room for you coming back. Clarence and myself fill two seats, and your grandfather and——"

"Grandmother fill up the other," added Sylvan. "But never mind; in coming back I can ride on the box with the coachman; but go I will to meet my venerable grandparents! Bless my wig! didn't I give away my grandmother at the altar, and shall I not pay them the attention of going to meet them on their return from their wedding tour?"

The horses started at a good pace, passed through the village street, entered the main road running miles between the great works, and rolled on into the silent forest road that led to the railway depot in the valley.

Here the carriage drew up before the solitary station house.

Soon the train ran in and stopped. Old Aaron Rockharrt got out and handed down his wife, before turning to face his sons. A man and maid servant, loaded down with handbags, umbrellas, waterproofs, and shawls, got out of another car.

"Fabian, put Mrs. Rockharrt into the carriage. I shall step into the waiting room to speak to the ticket agent," said old Aaron Rockharrt, as he strode off to the building.

Fabian Rockharrt gave his arm to the lady, who during all this time had remained closely veiled. He led her off, leaving Clarence and Sylvan on the platform to wait for the return of Mr. Rockharrt. As soon as Fabian and his companions were out of hearing of the rest of their party, he turned to her, and bending his head close to her ear, said:

"Well, Ann White, what have you to say for yourself, eh, Ann White?"

He felt her tremble as she answered defiantly:

"Mrs. Rockharrt, if you please."

"No; by my life I will never give to such as you my honored mother's name!"

"And yet I have it with all the rights and privileges it bestows, and I defy you, Fabian Rockharrt!"

"You know very little of the laws relating to marriage if you think you have legal right to the name and

position you have seized, or that I have not the power to thrust you out of my father's house and into a cell."

"You are insolent! I shall report your words to Mr. Rockharrt, and then we shall see who will be thrust out of his house!"

"I think that you had better not. Listen, and I will tell you something that you do not know, perhaps."

She turned quickly, inquiringly, toward him. He stooped and whispered a few words. He felt her thrill from head to foot, felt her rock and sway for a moment, and then—he had just time to catch her before she fell a dead weight in his arms.

CHAPTER IV

THE WHISPERED WORDS

"Well! what's all this?" abruptly demanded old Aaron Rockharrt, as he came up, followed by Clarence and Sylvan, just as Fabian was lifting the unconscious woman into the carriage.

"Mrs. Rockharrt has been over-fatigued, I think, sir, for she has fainted. But don't be alarmed; she is recovering," said Mr. Fabian, as he settled the lady in an easy position in a corner of the carriage, and found a smelling salts bottle and put it to her nose.

"'Alarmed?' Why should I be?"

"No reason why, sir," answered Mr. Fabian, who then stooped to the woman and whispered: "Nor need you be so. You are safe for the present."

"Will you get out of my way and let me come to my place?" demanded the Iron King.

"Pardon me, sir," said Fabian, stepping backward from the carriage.

"Fainting?" said the old man, in a tone of annoyance, as he took his seat beside his new wife, "fainting? The first Mrs. Rockharrt never fainted in her life; nor ever gave any sort of trouble. What's the matter with

you, Rose? Don't be a consummate fool and turn nervous. I won't stand any nonsense," he said roughly, as he peered into the pale face of his new slave.

"Oh, it is nothing," she faltered, "nothing. I was overcome by heat. It is a very hot day."

"Why, it is a very cool afternoon. What do you mean?" he demanded.

"It has been a very hot day, and the heat and fatigue——"

"Rubbish!" he interrupted. "If I were to give any attention to your faints you would be fainting every day just to have a fuss made over you. Now this fainting business has got to be stopped. Do you hear? If you are out of order, I will send for my family physician and have you examined. If you are really ill, you shall be put under medical treatment; if you are not, I will have no fine lady airs and affectations. The first Mrs. Rockharrt was perfectly free from them."

"I would not have given way to the weakness if I could have helped it—indeed I would not!" said the poor woman, very sincerely.

"We'll see to that!" retorted the Iron King.

Ah, poor Rose! She was not the old man's darling and sovereign, as she had hoped and planned to be. She was the tyrant's slave and victim.

A man of Aaron Rockharrt's temperament seldom, at the age of seventy-seven, becomes a lover; and never, at any age, a woman's slave.

Mr. Fabian now got into the carriage, and sat down on

the front cushion opposite his father and stepmother. Mr. Clarence was following him in, when Mr. Rockharrt roughly interfered.

"What are you about here, Clarence? What are you going to do?"

"Take my seat in the carriage, of course, sir," answered the young man, with a surprised look.

"You are going to do nothing of the sort! I don't choose to have the horses overtasked in this manner. I myself, with Fabian and my coachman, to say nothing of Mrs. Rockharrt, are weight enough for one pair of horses, and you can't come in here. Where's Sylvan?"

"On the box seat beside the driver."

"Really?" demanded the Iron King, in a sarcastic tone. "How many more of you desire to be drawn by one pair of horses? Tell Sylvan to come down off that."

"But, sir, there is not a single conveyance of any description at the station," urged Clarence.

"Indeed! And pray what do you call your own two pairs of sturdy legs? Are they not strong enough to convey you from here to North End, where you can get the hotel hack? And, by the way, why did you not engage the hack to come here and take you back?"

"Because it was out, sir."

"Then you two should not have come here to overload the horses. But as you have come, you must walk back. Has Sylvan got off his perch? Ah, yes; I see. Well, tell the coachman to drive first to the North End

Hotel. And do you two long-legged calves walk after it. If the hack should be still out when we get there, you can stay at the hotel until it comes in."

"All right, sir," said Clarence, good-humoredly; and he closed the door, and gave the order to the coachman, who immediately started his horses on the way to North End.

On the way home Mr. Clarence inquired of his nephew when he expected to receive his commission and where he expected to be orderd.

"How can I tell you? I must wait for a vacancy, I suppose, and then be sent to the Devil's Icy Peak or Fort Jumping Off Place, or some such other pleasant post of duty on the confines of terra incognita. But the farther off, the stranger and the savager it is, the better I shall like it for my own sake, but it will be rough on Cora," said the youth.

"But you do not dream of taking Cora out there!" exclaimed Clarence, in pained surprise.

"Oh, but I do! She insists on going where I go. She is bent on being a voluntary, unsalaried missionary and school mistress to the Indians just because Rule died a martyred minister and teacher among them."

"She is mad!" exclaimed Mr. Clarence; " mad."

"She has had enough to make her mad, but she is sane enough on this subject, I can tell you, Uncle Clarence. She is the most level-headed young woman that I know, and the plan of life that she has laid out for herself is the best course she could possibly pursue under the

present circumstances. She is very miserable here. This plan will give her the most complete change of scene and the most interesting occupation. It will cure her of her melancholy and absorption in her troubled past, and when she shall be cured she may return to her friends here, or she may meet with some fine fellow out there who may make her forget the dead and leave off her weeds. That is what I hope for, Uncle Clarence."

And for the rest of their walk they trudged on in silence or with but few words passed between them. It was sunset when they reached North End.

That evening when Sylvan and Cora found themselves together for a moment at Rockhold House, the youth said:

"Corona Rothsay, the sooner I get my orders and you and I depart for Scalping Creek or Perdition Peak, or wherever I am to be shoveled off to, the better, my dear," said the young soldier.

"What do you think of it all now, Sylvan?" she inquired.

"I think, Cora, that while we do stay here it would be Christian charity to be very good to 'the Rose that all admire.' Nobody will admire her any more, I think."

"Why?" inquired Cora, in surprise.

"Oh, you didn't see her face. She had her mask —veil, do you call it?—down, so you couldn't see. But, oh, my conscience! how she is changed in these last six weeks! She is not a blooming rose any more. She is a snubbed, trampled on, crushed and wilted rose. Her

face looks pale; her hair dull; her eyes weak; her beauty nowhere; her cheerfulness nowhere else."

Early the next morning, after a hasty breakfast, Mr. Rockharrt entered his carriage to drive to the works. Young Mrs. Rockharrt, under the plea of fatigue from her long journey, retired to her own room.

Cora said to her brother:

"Sylvan, I wish you would order the little carriage and take me to the Banks to see Violet. I should have paid her this attention sooner but for the pressure of work that has been upon me. I must defer it no longer, but go this morning."

"All right, Cora!" answered the young man, and he left the room to do his errand.

Cora went upstairs to get ready for her drive.

In about fifteen minutes the two were seated in the little open landau, that had been the gift of the late Mrs. Rockharrt to her beloved granddaughter, and that the latter always used when driving out in the country around Rockhold during the summer.

They did not have to cross the ferry, as the new house of Fabian Rockharrt was on the same side of the river as was Rockhold.

The road on this west side was, however, much rougher, though the scenery was much finer.

They drove on through the woods, which here clothed the foot of the mountain and grew quite down to the water's edge, meeting over their heads and casting the road into deep shadow.

They drove on for about three miles, when they came to a point where another road wound up the mountain side, through heavy woods, and brought them to a beautiful plateau, on which stood the handsome house of Fabian Rockharrt, in the midst of its groves, flower gardens, arbors, orchards and conservatories.

It was a double, two-storied house, of brown stone, with a fine green background of wooded mountain, and a front view of the river below and the mountains beyond. There were bay windows at each end and piazzas along the whole front.

As the carriage drew up before the door, Violet was discovered walking up and down the front porch. She looked very fragile, but very pretty with her slight, graceful figure in a morning dress of white muslin, with blue ribbons at her throat and in her pale gold hair.

She came down to meet her visitors.

"Oh, I am so glad you have come, Cora and Sylvan!" she said, throwing her arms around the young lady and kissing her heartily, and then giving her hand and offering her cheek for a greeting from the young man.

"I fear you must be lonely here, Violet," said Cora.

"Awfully lonesome after Fabian has gone away in the morning, Cora. It would be such a charity in you to come and stay with me for a little while! Come in now and we will talk about it," said the little lady, as she led the way back to the house.

"Sylvan," she continued, as they paused for a moment on the porch, "send your coachman around to the sta-

ble to put up your carriage. You and Cora will spend the day with me at the very least."

"Just as Cora pleases; ask her," said the young man with a glance toward his sister.

"Yes," she answered.

"You are a love!" exclaimed Violet, as she led the way into the hall and thence into a pleasant morning room.

Cora laid off her bonnet and sank into an easy chair by the front window.

"Now, as soon as you are well rested, I wish to show you both over the house and grounds. Such a charming house, Cora! Such beautiful grounds, Sylvan!" exclaimed the proud little mistress.

Cora smiled approval, but did not explain that she herself had gone all through the establishment several times, in the course of its fitting up, to see that all things were arranged properly before the arrival of the married pair.

And when, a little later, the trio went through the rooms, she expressed as much pleasure in their appearance as if she had never seen them before.

The brother and sister spent a very pleasant day at Violet Banks, and when in the cool of the evening they would have taken leave, the young wife pleaded with them to stay all night.

In the midst of this discussion Mr. Fabian Rockharrt came home from North End.

As he entered the parlor he heard his Wood Violet at

her petition. He greeted them all, kissed his wife, kissed Cora, and shook hands with Sylvan.

"Now, let me settle this matter," he said, good-humoredly, as he threw himself into a large arm chair.

"First tell me, Cora, what is the obstacle to your spending the night with us?"

"Only that I did not announce even this visit to the family at Rockhold."

"Do you owe any special obligation to do so?"

"It is not a question of obligation, but of courtesy. I should certainly be remiss in politeness to leave the house for a two-days' visit without giving notice of my intention," she answered.

"Oh! I see! Well, I can fix all that. You will both remain to dinner. After dinner it will not be too late for Sylvan to take my sure-footed cob and ride back to Rockhold and explain to the family that Cora is to remain here overnight, and that I will myself take her home to-morrow evening if she should wish to go."

"What do you say, Cora?" inquired the young man.

"I accept Uncle Fabian's offer and will remain here for the present," said the young lady.

"Like the sensible woman that you are!" exclaimed Mr. Fabian.

Half an hour later the four sat down to dinner in one of the prettiest little dining rooms that ever was seen.

Soon after the pleasant meal was over, Sylvan took leave of his friends, mounted the white cob that stood

saddled at the door, and rode down the wooded hill to the river road leading to Rockhold.

The three left behind spent the remainder of the evening on the front porch, watching the deep river, the hoary mountains, the starry sky, and listening to the hum of insects, the whirl of waters and the singing of the summer breeze through the pines that clothed the precipice, and talking very little.

They retired to rest at a late hour.

Yet on the next morning they met at an early breakfast, for Mr. Fabian had to go to the works to make up for much lost time while affairs were left under the sole management of Mr. Clarence.

Cora remained with Violet, who took her into a more interior confidence, and exhibited with equal pride and delight sundry dainty little garments of fine cambric and linen richly trimmed with lace or embroidery, all the work of her own delicate fingers.

"They tell me, Cora, that I could buy all these things as cheap and as good as I can make them. But I do take such pleasure in making them with my own hands."

Cora kissed her tenderly for all reply.

Then the little lady began to ask questions about her new stepmother-in-law.

"You know, Cora, that I could not ask you yesterday while Sylvan was with us. He is in your full confidence, no doubt, and I have perfect faith in him; but for all that we cannot speak freely on all subjects before a third person, however near and dear. At least I could

not ask searching questions about Mr. Rockharrt's marriage before Sylvan. Such a strange marriage, with such a disparity in years between a man of Mr. Rockharrt's venerable age and Mrs. Stillwater's blooming youth! I saw her once by chance. She looked a perfect Hebe of radiant health and beauty."

Cora Rothsay smiled. She might have told this little lady that there was not much more difference between the ages of Rose Stillwater at thirty-seven and Aaron Rockharrt at seventy-seven than there was between Violet Wood at seventeen and Fabian Rockharrt at fifty-two. But as the young wife did not see this fact, Cora refrained from showing it to her.

Then Violet wanted to know what Cora herself thought of the marriage.

Cora said she thought it concerned only the parties in question, and only time could tell how it would turn out.

In such confidential talk passed the long summer day.

In the cool of the evening Mr. Fabian came home to dinner.

He joined his wife in trying to persuade Cora to remain with them yet another day; but Cora explained that there were many reasons for her return to Rockhold.

Finding her obdurate, Mr. Fabian ordered Mrs. Rothsay's landau to be at the door at a certain hour.

And as soon as dinner was over and Cora had put on her bonnet and taken leave of Violet, with a promise to

return within a few days, Mr. Fabian placed her in the carriage, took his seat beside her, and drove down the wooded hill to the river road below.

"It is not altogether for pleasure that I pressed you to stay till to-night, Cora, although your presence gave great pleasure to my wife and self. I wished to have a private talk with you. Cora, you ought not to stay at Rockhold. You should come to us," said Mr. Fabian, as they bowled along the wooded road between the foot of the hills and the banks of the river.

"Why?" inquired the lady.

He did not answer at once, but drove slowly on as if to gain time for thought. At length, however, he said:

"I think that a home with Violet and myself at the Banks would be much more congenial to you than one with your grandfather and his new wife at Rockhold."

"But, my dear Uncle Fabian, under present circumstances my grandfather is my natural protector and Rockhold my proper home until my brother has one to offer me."

"Cora, you are not frank with me. I know how you feel about staying at Rockhold, and also why you feel as you do; though I do not see by what agency or intuition you could have gained the knowledge you seem to possess."

"Uncle Fabian, I have no positive knowledge of any cause why I should shrink from continuing in my natural home. I have only suspicions, which perhaps you

could clear up or confirm, if you would be frank with me."

He drove on slowly in silence without answering her. She continued:

"I wrote to you while you were in Europe, informing you that Mrs. Stillwater had been invited by my grandfather to come to Rockhold to remain as long as should be convenient to herself. You never replied to my letter."

"I never got such a letter, Cora. It must have been lost with others that miscarried among the Continental mails, when they were following me from one office to another. But even if I had received such a letter, it could have made no difference. I could not have prevented Mrs. Stillwater's visit, nor the event that resulted from the visit. I could not have written or returned in time."

"Should you have prevented the visit or the marriage that followed if you could have done so?"

"Most certainly I should."

"Why?"

"For the same reason that you, or Clarence, or Sylvan would have done so. For the reason of its total unfitness. But, Cora, my dear, I repeat that you have not been frank with me. You are hiding something from me."

"And I repeat, Uncle Fabian, that I have no positive knowledge of any——"

"Yes; so you said before," he exclaimed, interrupting

her. "You have no positive knowledge, but you have very strong suspicions founded upon very solid grounds! Now, what are these grounds, my dear? I am your uncle. You should give me your confidence."

If Mr. Fabian had not put the matter in this way, and if they had not been driving along the dark and over-shadowed road where the meeting branches of the trees above almost hid the light of the stars, so that only one or two occasionally gleamed through the foliage, Cora would never have been able to reply to her uncle as she did.

"Uncle Fabian, do you remember a certain warm night in September some five years ago, when we stopped at the Wirt House in Baltimore?"

"On our way home from Canada—yes, I do."

"My room was close that night and I could not sleep. A little after midnight I got up and put on my dressing gown and went into the adjoining room, which was our private parlor, and I sat down in a cool corner in the shadow of the curtain and in the draught of the window. I fell asleep, but was soon awakened by the sound of a door opening and some one whispering. I was about to call out when I recognized your voice. The room was pitch dark. I could not see you; but then I was about to speak, when I recognized another voice—Mrs. Stillwater's. You had let yourself in by your own key, through the door leading from her room, which was on the opposite side of the parlor from mine."

Cora paused to wait for the effect of her words.

Mr. Fabian drove on slowly in silence.

"I sat there quite still, too much surprised to speak or move."

"And so you overheard that interview," said Mr. Fabian, with a dash of anger in his usually pleasant voice.

"I could not escape. I was amazed, spellbound, too confused to know what to do."

"Well?"

"I gathered from your words that you and she were either secretly married or secretly engaged to be married."

"That was your opinion."

"What other opinion could I form? You were providing her with a house and an income. She was speaking of herself as a daughter-in-law sure to be acceptable to your father and mother. Of course, I judged from that that you were either wedded or betrothed, which was an incomprehensible thing to me, who had been led to believe that the lady was the wife of Captain Stillwater, remaining in Baltimore to meet her husband, whose ship was then daily expected to arrive."

"You were wrong, Cora," said Mr. Fabian, now speaking in his natural tone, without a shade of anger—"quite wrong, my dear; there was nothing of the sort. I was never engaged to Mrs. Stillwater."

"Then she subsequently refused you. I am telling you what I thought then, not what I think now. I have heard from her own lips that after her husband's death you proposed to her and she refused you."

Mr. Fabian shook with silent laughter. When he recovered he asked:

"And you believed her?"

"I do not know. I was in a maze. There were so many contradictory and inconsistent circumstances surrounding the woman that seemed to live and move in a web of deception woven by herself," said Cora, wearily, as if tired of the subject.

"And, after all, she is a very shallow creature, incapable of any deep scheming; there is no great harm. She knows that she is beautiful—still beautiful—and her only art is subtle flattery. She flattered your grandfather 'to the bent of his humor,' with no deeper design than to marry him and gain a luxurious home and an ample dower, as well as an adoring husband. You see she has succeeded in marrying him, poor little devil! but she gained nothing but a prison and a jailer and penal servitude. I repeat, there is no great harm in her; and yet, Cora, my dear, I do not permit my wife to visit her, and I do not wish you to remain in the same house with her."

"Why, Uncle Fabian! you were the very first to introduce her to us! It was you who were charged with the duty of finding a nursery governess for me, and you selected Rose Flowers from a host of applicants."

"I know I did, my dear. She seemed to me a lovely, amiable, attractive girl of seventeen, not very well educated, yet quite old enough and learned enough to be nursery governess to a little lady of seven summers.

And she did her duty and made herself beloved by you all, did she not?"

"Yes, indeed."

"And so she always has done and always will do. And yet, my dear, you must not live in the same house with her now, even if you did live years together when she was your governess."

"Are you not even more prejudiced against Mrs. Rockharrt than I am?"

"Bah! no, my dear; I have no ill will against the woman, though I will not let my niece live with her or my wife visit her."

"I wish, Uncle Fabian, that you would be more explicit and tell me all you know of Rose Flowers—or Mrs. Stillwater—before she became Mrs. Rockharrt."

"Have you told me all you know of her, Cora, my dear?"

"I have said several times that I know nothing, and yet—stop——"

"What?"

"In addition to that strange interview that I overheard, yet did not understand, there was something else that I saw, but equally did not understand."

"What was that?"

"Something that happened while were were in New York City in May last."

"Will you tell me what it was?"

"Yes, certainly. We were staying at the Star Hotel.

We stayed over Sunday, and we went to the Episcopal church near our hotel, to hear an English divine preach."

"Well?"

"He was the celebrated pulpit orator, the Dean of Olivet——"

"Good Heav——" exclaimed Mr. Fabian, involuntarily, but stopping himself suddenly.

"What is the matter?" demanded Cora, suspiciously.

"I was too near the edge of the precipice. We might have been in the river in another moment," said Mr. Fabian.

Cora did not believe him, but she refrained from saying so.

"The danger is past. Go on, my dear."

"We were shown into the strangers' pew. The voluntary was playing. We all bowed our heads for the short private prayer. The voluntary stopped. Then we heard the voice of the dean and we lifted our heads. I turned to offer Mrs. Stillwater a prayer book. Then I saw her face. It was ghastly, and her eyes were fixed in a wild stare upon the face of the dean, whose eyes were upon the open book from which he was reading. Quick as lightning she covered her face with her veil and so remained until we all knelt down for the opening prayer. When we arose from our knees, Rose was gone."

Cora paused for a few moments.

"Go on, go on," said Mr. Fabian.

"We did not leave the church. Grandfather evidently took for granted that Rose had left on account of some

trifling indisposition, and he is not easily moved by women's ailments, you know. So we stayed out the services and the sermon. When we returned to the hotel we found that Rose had retired to her room suffering from a severe attack of neuralgic headache, as she said."

"What did you think?"

"I thought she might have been suddenly attacked by maddening pain, which had given the wild look to her eyes; but the next day I had good reason to change my opinion as to the cause of her strange demeanor."

"What was that?"

"We all left the hotel at an early hour to take the train for West Point. Mrs. Stillwater seemed to have quite recovered from her illness. We had arrived at the depot and received our tickets, and were waiting at the rear of a great crowd at the railway gate, till it should be opened to let us pass to our train. I was standing on the right of my grandfather, and Rose on my right. Suddenly a man looked around. He was a great Wall Street broker who had dealings with your firm. Seeing grandfather, he spoke to him heartily, and then begged to introduce the gentleman who was with him. And then and there he presented the Dean of Olivet to Mr. Rockharrt, who, after a few words of polite greeting, presented the dean to me, and turnd to find Rose Stillwater."

"Well! Well!"

"She was gone. She had vanished from the crowd at the railway gate as swiftly, as suddenly, and as in-

comprehensibly as she had vanished from the church. After looking about him a little, my grandfather said that she had got pressed away from us by the crowd, but that she knew her way and would take care of herself and follow us to the train all right. But when the gates were opened we did not see her, nor did we find her on the train, though Mr. Rockharrt walked up and down through the twenty cars looking for her, and feeling sure that we should find her. The train had started, so we had to go on without her. My grandfather concluded that she had accidentally missed it and would follow by the next one."

"And what did you think, Cora?"

"I thought that, for some antecedent and mysterious reason, she had fled from before the face of the Dean of Olivet at the railway station, even as she had done at the church."

"When and where did you find her?"

"Not until our return to New York City. My grandfather was in a fine state; kept the telegraph wires at work between West Point and New York, until he got some clew to her, and then, without waiting for the closing exercises at the military academy, he hurried me back to the city. We found the missing woman at St. L——'s Hospital, where she had been conveyed after having been found in an unconscious condition in the ladies' room of the railway depot. She was better, and we brought her away to the hotel. The Dean of Olivet went to Newport, and Mrs. Stillwater recovered her

spirits. A few days later she married Mr. Rockharrt at the church where the dean had preached. You know everything else about the matter. And now, Uncle Fabian, tell me that woman's story, or at least all that is proper for me to know of it."

"Cora, you read Rose Stillwater aright. She did on both these occasions fly from before the face of the Dean of Olivet. I will tell you all about her, for it is now right that you should know; but you must promise never to reveal it."

"I promise."

CHAPTER V

WHO WAS ROSE FLOWERS?

"WELL, my dear Corona, I must ask you to cast your thoughts back to that year when you first came to Rockhold to live, and engrossed so much of your grandmother's time and attention that your grandfather grew jealous and impatient, and commissioned me to 'hire' a nursery governess to look after you and teach you the rudiments of education. You remember that time, Cora?" inquired Mr. Fabian, as he held the reins with a slackened grasp, so that the horse jogged slowly along the wooded road between the foot of the mountain and the banks of the river, under the star-lit sky.

"I remember perfectly," answered the girl.

"Well, business took me to New York about that time, and I thought it a good opportunity to hunt up a governess for you. So I advertised in the New York papers, giving my address at an uptown office, while my own business kept me downtown.

"The first letter I opened interested me so much that I gave my whole attention to that first, and so it happened that I had no occasion to touch the others. It was from one Ann White, who described herself as a moth-

erless and fatherless girl of sixteen, a stranger in this country, who was trying to get employment as assistant teacher, governess, or copyist, and who was well fitted to take sole charge of a little girl seven years old.

"Perhaps this might not have impressed me, but she went on to write that she had not a friend in the whole country, that she was utterly destitute and desolate, and begged me for Heaven's mercy not to throw her letter aside, but to see her and give her a trial. She inclosed her photograph, not, as she wrote, from any vanity, but that I might see her face and take pity on her.

"Cora, there was an air of childish frankness and simplicity about her letter that was well illustrated by her photograph. It was that of a sweet-smiling baby face; a sunny, innocent, beautiful face. I answered the letter immediately, asking for her address, that I might call and see her. The next day I received her answer, thanking me with enthusiastic earnestness for my prompt attention to her note, and giving me the number and street of her residence in Harlem. I got on a Second Avenue car and rode out to Harlem; got off at the terminus, walked up a cross street and walked some distance to a bijou of a brown cottage, standing in shaded grounds, with sunny gleams and flower beds, and half covered by creeping roses, clematis, wistaria, and all that.

"I went in and was received by the beautiful being that you have known as Rose Flowers. She was dressed in some misty, cloud-like pale blue fabric that set off her blonde beauty to perfection. After we were seated

and had talked some time, I telling her what light duties would be required of her—only the care of one good little girl of seven years, and of a very mild old lady who was the only lady in the house, and of the old gentleman who was the head of the family, strict but just in all his dealings; and of our country house in the mountains and our town house in the State capital—and she expressing the greatest and frankest anxiety to become a member of such a happy, amiable, prosperous family, and declaring with childish boasting that she was quite competent to perform all the duties expected of her and would perform them conscientiously, I suddenly asked her for her references.

" 'I—I have not a friend in this world,' she said; and then in a timid voice, she asked: 'Are references indispensable?'

" 'Of course,' I answered.

" 'Then the Lord help me! Nothing is left but the river. The river won't require references'; and with that she buried her little golden-haired head in the cushions of the sofa and burst into a perfect storm of sobs and tears. Now, Cora, what in the deuce was a man to do? I had never seen anything like that in all my life before. I had never seen a woman in such a fit before. All this was strange and horrible to me.

"I am a middling strong old fellow, but that beautiful girl's despair upset me, and I never could hear any one hint suicide, and she talked of the river. The river would receive her without references. The river was

kinder than her own fellow creatures! The river would give her a home and rest and peace! She only wanted to do honest work for her living, but human beings would not even let her work for them without references! And I declare to you, Cora, she was not acting, as you might suspect. She was in deadly earnest. Her sobs shook her whole frame.

"At last I myself behaved like an ass. I went and knelt down beside her so as to get quite close to her, and I began to comfort her. I told her not to mind about the references; that she might have me for a reference all the days of her life; that she should have the situation at Rockhold, where I would convey her and introduce her on my own responsibility.

"While I spoke to her I laid my hand on the little golden-haired head and smoothed it all the time. Out of pity, Cora, I assure you on my honor, out of pity. After a while her sobs seemed to subside slowly. I told her that her face was to me a sufficient recommendation in her favor, an all sufficient testimonial of character; but that I must have her confidence in exchange for my own.

"You see, Cora, I was very sorry for the poor, pretty creature, and was really anxious to befriend her; but also my curiosity was keenly piqued. I wished to know her private history, and so I assured her that she should have the position she wanted on the condition of telling me her antecedents.

"At last she yielded, and told me the story of her

short, willful life. This, then, was her poor, little, pathetic story:

"Her name was Ann White. She was the daughter of Amos White, an English curate, living in a remote village in Northumberland, and of his first wife, who had died during the infancy of her youngest child, Ann, a year after which her father had married again. Ann's stepmother was one of the most beautiful women in England, and—one of the most discontented, as the wife of a widowed clergyman who was old enough to be her father, who had three sons and two daughters by a former marriage, and who was trying to support his family on a hundred pounds a year. Yet, so long as her father lived, Ann's childhood was happy. But her father, who had been a consumptive, also died when Ann was about seven years old. Then the family was broken up. The three stepsons went to seek their fortunes in New Zealand. The eldest stepdaughtr had been married and had gone to London a few months before her father's death; the younger stepdaughter went to live with that married sister. Ann and her stepmother were permitted to remain at the parsonage until the successor of Amos White could be appointed. At last the new curate came—a handsome and accomplished man—Rev. Raphael Rosslynn. He was a bachelor, without near relatives. He called on the Widow White and at once set her heart at ease by begging her not to trouble herself to leave the parsonage, but to remain there for the present at least, and take him as a boarder. He

was perfectly frank with the lovely widow and told her that he was engaged to his own cousin, and that as soon as he should get a living promised him on the death of the present incumbent, and which was worth twelve hundred pounds a year, he should marry, but that he could not allow himself to anticipate happiness that must rise on a grave. But in the course of the year that which might have been expected happened. The young widow, who had never cared for her elderly first husband, fell desperately in love with her lodger, who was not very slow to respond, for her grace, beauty and allurements attracted, bewildered, and bedeviled him, so that he forgot or deplored his plighted vows to his good little cousin. To shorten the story, the cousin released him. In a few days the curate and the widow were married. Ann was utterly neglected, ignored, and forgotten. Her lessons, which, before the advent of the handsome curate, had been the widow's care, were now suspended. Time went on, and these ardent lovers cooled off. Not that their youth or health or beauty waned; not at all; but that their illusions were fading. Yet, as often happens, as love cooled, jealousy warmed to life—each one conscious of indifference toward the other, yet resenting a corresponding indifference in the other. As years went on, six children were born to this unhappy pair, whom not the Lord but the devil had joined together, and with their increasing family came increasing poverty. It was hard to support a growing household on one hundred pounds a year.

"In the seventh year of their marriage, in desperation, the Reverend Raphael advertised his ability and readiness to 'prepare young men for college.' He obtained but one pupil, one Alfred Whyte, the son of a retired brewer. You perceive that he had the same surname with the young Ann, but it was spelled differently—with a 'y' instead of an 'i,' as her name was. He seems to have been a fine, hearty, good-natured young fellow, about twenty years of age, with a short, stout form, a round, red face, and dark eyes and hair. He hated study, but loved children, animals, and outdoor sports. It was in the course of nature that he should fall in love with the fair fifteen-year-old beauty Ann White.

"She returned his affection because since her father's death he was the only human being who had ever been kind to her. The first year that he spent at the parsonage was the happiest year Ann had ever known. Before it drew to an end, however, their happiness was clouded. The young man had over and over again assured the girl of his love for her, and at last he asked her to marry him. She consented. Then he wrote and asked permission of his father to wed the curate's stepdaughter.

"The answer might have been anticipated. The purse-proud retired brewer, who had dreams of his only son and heir going into Parliament and marrying some impoverished nobleman's daughter, wrote two furious letters, one to his son, commanding his immediate return home, and another to the Rev. Raphael Rosslynn,

reproaching him with having entrapped his pupil into an engagement with his pauper stepdaughter.

"We can judge the effect of these letters upon the peace of the parsonage.

"The Reverend Raphael commanded his pupil into his presence, and after severely censuring him for his conduct in 'betraying the confidence of the family who had received him into its bosom,' he requested that Master Whyte should leave the house with all convenient speed.

"The youth urged that he had meant no harm and had done no harm, that he was honestly in love with the young lady, and had honestly asked leave to marry her, and that he certainly would marry her—

'Though mammy and daddy and all gang mad.'

"Mr. Rosslynn referred him to his father's letter and ordered him to depart. And then the reverend gentleman went to his wife's room and bitterly reproached her that her forward girl had been the cause of his losing his pupil and eighty pounds a year.

"She told him that the fault was his own; that he should never have received a young man as a resident pupil in the house where there was a young girl.

"A fierce quarrel ensued, which was ended at last by the reverend gentleman going out and banging the door behind him with a force that shook the house, and in a state of mind that rendered him singularly unfit to read

the prayers for the sick beside the bed of a dying parishioner to whom he was urgently summoned.

"Mrs. Rosslynn immediately hastened to wreak her vengeance on her stepdaughter. She set her teeth as she seized the unlucky girl, whom she found at work in the kitchen, pushed her roughly on into the narrow passage up the steep stairs and into the little back loft that the child called her own bedroom.

"Here she took a firmer grip upon the girl, and with a dog whip that she had hastily snatched from the hat rack in passing, she lashed the hapless creature over back and shoulder.

"Ann never sruggled or cried out, but held her tongue in fierce wrath and stubborn endurance. Could that woman, the victim of all ungovernable passions, have but known what she did, or foreseen its results!

"At last she ceased, pushed the bruised and wounded child away from her, sank panting to a chair, and as soon as she recovered her breath, began to insult and abuse the orphan child of her deceased husband, charging her with disgracing the house by improper conduct, of which the girl had never even dreamed; accusing her of causing the loss of their pupil and the income derived from him, and reproaching her for making discord between herself (Mrs. Rosslynn) and her husband.

"Ann replied by not one word.

"At length the maddened woman, having talked herself out of breath, got up, left the room, and locked the

door, not on her victim alone, but on all the evil spirits she had raised from Tartarus and left with the girl.

"Ann sank upon the bed. weeping, moaning, and grinding her teeth, her body prostrated by pain, her soul filled with bitter wrath and scorn toward one whom she should rather have been led to love and honor. In the fiery torture of her flesh and the humiliation of her spirit she uttered but these piteous words:

" 'Oh, my own mother!—oh, my lost father! do you see your child?'

"For more than an hour she lay there before the fierce smarting and burning of her scourged flesh began to subside. The short November afternoon darkened into night. No one came near her. The hour for supper passed. No one called her to the meal. She heard the family passing to their rooms. She heard her mother putting the other children to bed—a duty that she herself had hitherto performed. At last all sounds died away in the house, and she knew that all the inmates had retired, and the lights were out. She was meditating to run away; she did not know in what direction, or to what end, further than to escape from the home that was hateful to her.

"Evil spirits were with her, suggesting many desperate thoughts; at length they infused a deadly, horrible temptation to a deed of self-destruction so ghastly that its discovery should appal the family, the parish, and the whole world; that should cover her tormentors with shame, reproach and infamy.

"She sprang up from her bed and went to search in the drawer of a little old wooden stand, until she found a half page of note paper and a bit of lead pencil.

"She took them out and wrote to her persecutors, saying that she was going to throw herself—not into the sea, nor from a precipice, because both earth and sea give up their dead—but into the quicksands, which never give up anything; they, her tormentors, should never even see again the body they had bruised and torn and degraded; and she prayed that the Lord would ever deal by them as they had dealt with her.

"It must have been near midnight when she heard a tap at her window, so light that at first she thought it was made by a large raindrop; but presently her name was softly called by a voice that she recognized. Then she understood it all, and her thoughts of the quicksands vanished.

"Her room was a small one in the rear of the house, immediately over the back kitchen, and her back window opened upon the roof of the wood shed behind the kitchen. She went and hoisted the widow, and there on the roof of the wood shed stood Alfred Whyte.

"He told her that he had taken leave of the ogre and the orgress hours before, and they thought he was off to London by the four o'clock mail; but that he had gone no farther than the railway station, where he had bought a ticket, and had gone on the platform, as if to wait for his train; but when it came up, instead of taking his place on it, he had slipped away in the confu-

sion of its arrival and had hidden himself in the woods on the other side of the road, where he had waited until it was dark, when he had come back to watch the parsonage until every one should have gone to bed, so that he could get speech with Ann.

"And then he asked her if she were 'game for a bolt.'

"She did not understand him; but when he next spoke plainly, and inquired if she would run away with him and be married, she answered promptly that she would.

"He told her to get ready quickly, and to dress warmly, for the night was damp and cold, and to tie up a little bundle of things that she might need on the journey; but not to take much, because he had plenty of money, and could buy her all she needed.

"'Much!' Poor little thing, she had not much to take! She put on her best dress—a well-worn blue serge—a coarse black cloth walking jacket, and a little straw hat with a faded blue ribbon. She had no gloves. She tied up a hair brush, worn nearly to the wood, a tooth brush not much better, the half of a broken dressing comb, and one clean linen collar, in a small pocket handkerchief, and she was all ready for her wedding trip.

"He told her to bolt her door before she came out, because that would take the ogres some little while to force it open, and would give the fugitives a better start.

"Ann did everything her boy lover directed, and final-

ly stepped out of the window on to the roof below, and joined him. He let down the window and closed the shutters with a spring that securely fastened them.

"That, he told her, would certainly give them a longer start, for it would take an hour at least to force the room open and discover her flight.

"Then they left the parsonage together.

"She had forgotten all about the parting note of malediction which she had left behind her on the stand, as she stepped along the lane leading to the highway.

"He asked her to take his arm, and when they reached the public road, he inquired if she were game for a ten-mile walk.

"She told him that she could walk to the end of the world with him, because she was so happy to be beside the only one on earth who had ever been kind to her—since her father's death.

"Then he explained the steps that he had taken, and must still take, to elude pursuit; how that he had gone to the railway station and bought a first-class ticket for the four o'clock express to London, and afterward, when the train came up, he had mingled with the crowd getting off and getting on, and so eluded observation, and had slipped away and hidden himself in the thicket until dark, so as to make every one concerned believe that he had gone off by the mail train alone to London.

"Now he told her that they must trudge straight on ten miles north, to take the train to Glasgow; so that

while people were hunting for them in the south, they would be safe in the north.

"As they walked on he told her that he wanted to get away from England and see the world—the new world across the ocean. He had seen Europe summer after summer, traveling with his father and mother on the Continent. Now he wanted to see America; and asked her if she did not also.

"She told him that she wanted to see every place that he wanted to see, and to go everywhere he wanted to go, for that he was the only friend she had in all the wide world.

"So they walked on for about three hours, and then, about two o'clock in the morning, they reached the little railway station of Skelton. They had to wait two hours for the parliamentary train, which came heavily puffing in about five o'clock on that November morning.

"Young Whyte took second-class tickets, and led his closely veiled companion to her seat on the train. And they moved off.

"They reached Glasgow about ten o'clock the next day, and found that there was a steamer bound for New York, to sail at noon. No time was to be lost, so they both went to the agency together, represented themselves as a newly-married pair, and engaged the only state-room to be procured—which happened to be in the second cabin. Their tickets were filled in with the names of Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Whyte—which indeed constituted a legal marriage in Scotland, where a marriage-

able pair of lovers have only to declare themselves man and wife, in the presence of competent witnesses, to be as lawfully married as if the ceremony had been performed by the Archbishop of Canterbury in his own cathedral.

"They took possession of their stateroom on the *Caledonian,* which sailed at noon of the same day, and in due time arrived at New York.

"They spent two days at an uptown hotel, and then took the pretty cottage at Harlem, in which they lived for several months. Ann's boy-husband often told her that she grew prettier every day, and he seemed to grow fonder of her every day. He supplied her with a nicer outfit of clothing and more pocket money than she had ever had in her poverty-stricken life, and made her much happier every way than she had ever been before, as long as his money lasted.

"He had left England with nearly one hundred pounds in his pocket—the amount of his half-yearly allowance.

"On his arrival in New York he had written to his father and confessed his marriage with his tutor's stepdaughter and begged forgiveness and—remittances.

"Ann declined to write to her stepmother or the curate, declaring that she preferred that they should believe that she had been driven by their cruelty to bury herself in the quicksands, and that they should suffer all the remorse of conscience and reprobation of society that their conduct toward her deserved.

"But weeks passed on, and no letter filled with blessings and bank notes came from the offended and obdurate father, though the boy constantly assured his girl-wife that the expected epistle would surely come in time, for he was the 'old man's' only son, whom he would not be likely to discard.

"Meanwhile their money was running low. The youth was anxious to travel and see the new world, and to take his bride with him, but he could not do so without funds. At the end of six weeks after he had written the first letter to his father he wrote a second, but received no answer; later still he wrote a third, with no better success.

"They had gone a little into debt, in order to eke out their little ready money until the longed-for letters of credit should come from England; but at the end of six months credit and cash were nearly exhausted.

"One morning in May the boy-husband took leave of the girl-wife, saying, as he kissed her good-by, that he was going down into the city to see if he could get some work to do.

"Without the least misgiving, she received his farewell kiss, and saw him depart—watched him all the way down the street, until he got to Second Avenue and boarded a downtown car.

"Then she re-entered the little gate, and began to tend the jonquils and hyacinths that were just coming into bloom in her little flower garden. She did not expect to see him until night, nor—did she see him even

then. When the little gate opened at eight o'clock and a man came up the walk leading to the front door at which she stood, he was not her husband, but the letter carrier, who put a letter in her hand and went away.

"She ran into the house, and lighted the gas to read her letter. Though it gave her a shock, it did not shake her faith in her boy.

"The letter told her, in effect, that Alfred Whyte, when he left her that morning, had started to go to England in the only way by which he could get there—that is, by working his passage as a deck hand on board an outward-bound ship; that he had decided on this course so as to get a personal interview with his father, to whom he would go as a penitent prodigal son; for he was sure of obtaining by this means forgiveness, and assistance that would enable him to return and bring his little wife back to England, where they would thenceforth live in comfort and luxury; that the reason he had not confided to her his intention of making the voyage was because he dreaded opposition from her that might have led him to abandon the one plan by which he hoped to better their condition.

"He concluded by entreating her not to think for one instant that he intended to desert her, who was dearer to him than his own life, but to trust in him as he trusted in her. In a postscript he told her where to find the small balance of money they had left, as he had only taken enough for his car fare to the city. In a second postscript he promised to write by every opportunity.

In a third and last postscript he begged her to keep up her heart.

"It seemed a frank letter, yet it was reticent upon one point—the name of the ship on which he had sailed. This omission might have been accidental. It certainly did not raise any doubt of the boy's good faith in the mind of the girl.

"She cried a great deal over the separation from her lad, and she made a confidante of the elderly Irishwoman who was her sole servant.

"After two weeks, Ann began to watch daily for the letter carrier, in hope of getting a letter from Alfred; but day after day, week after week, passed and none came. But there came news of the wreck of the *Porpoise,* which had sailed from New York for London on the very day that Alfred Whyte had left the country—and which had gone down in a storm in mid ocean with all on board.

"But as numerous ships had left New York on that day bound for various British ports, it was impossible to discover whether the boy was on board or if he shipped under his own name or an assumed one.

"Ann cried more than ever for a few days, but then seemed to give up her lad for lost, and to resign herself to the 'inevitable.'

"She wrote to Mr. Alfred Whyte, Senior, but got no reply to her letter; again and again she wrote with no better success. The little balance of money left by her

boy-husband was all gone. She began to sell off the trifles of jewelry that he had given her.

"One morning the letter carrier left a letter with a London postmark containing a bill of exchange for a hundred pounds, and not one word besides.

"Had it come from her boy-husband or from his father? She could not tell.

"Well, to be brief, she never saw nor heard of him again. She lived comfortably with her motherly old servant, enjoyed life thoroughly and grew more beautiful every day, and this fool's paradise lasted as long as her money did. Before her last dollar was gone, she saw the advertisement in the *Pursuivant* for a nursery governess, and answered it, as has been told.

"This, my dear Cora, is the substance of the story told me by Ann White on the day that I called on her in answer to her letter. What do you think of it?" inquired Mr. Fabian, when he had finished his narrative.

"I think the cruel neglect of her stepparents and the sufferings of her childhood accountable for all her faults and I feel very sorry for her, notwithstanding that she seems to be a very heartless animal," replied Corona.

"That is the secret of the wonderful preservation of her youth and beauty even up to this present time. Nothing wears a woman out as fast as her own heart."

"You engaged her as you promised to do, but why did you introduce her at Rockhold as a single girl, and why under an alias?" gravely inquired Corona.

"I introduced her as a single girl at her own request

because of her extreme youth and her timidity. She naturally shrank from being known as a discarded wife or a doubtful widow. Besides, I never did say she was a single girl. I merely presented her as Rose Flowers, and left it to be inferred from her baby face that she was so."

"But why Rose Flowers when her name was Ann White?"

"What a cross-questioner you are, Corona! but I will answer you. Again it was by her own desire that I presented her as Rose Flowers, which was not an alias, as she explained to me, but a part of her true name. She had been baptized as Rose Anna Flowers, which was the maiden name of her grandmother, her father's mother."

Cora might have asked another question, not so easily answered, if she had known the circumstances to which it related, namely: why Mr. Fabian had fabricated that false story of the young governess which he palmed upon his parents; but, in fact, Cora, at that time a child seven years old, had never heard of it. But she made another inquiry.

"What became of Rose Flowers after she left us? Did she really go to another place? Who was—Captain Stillwater?"

Mr. Fabian drove slowly and thoughtfully on without answering her question until she had repeated it. Then he said:

"Cora, my dear, that is a story I cannot tell you. Let

it be enough for me to say, the Stillwater episode in the life of this lady is the ground upon which I forbid my wife to visit her and object to my niece associating with her."

"Does Violet know the Stillwater story?"

"No; not so much of it even as you have heard. Now, look here, Cora, you think it inconsistent perhaps that I should have brought this woman to Rockland years ago to become your governess, and now, when she is my father's wife, object to your intimacy with her. In the first instance she has been far, very far, 'more sinned against than sinning'; she had been very imprudent, that was all. She was really the wife, by Scotch law, of the boy she ran away with and then lost. I saw nothing in her case that ought to prevent her entrance into a respectable family, and Heaven knows I pitied her and tried to save her by bringing her to Rockhold. I saved her only for a few years. After she left us—but there, I cannot tell you that story! You must not be intimate with her."

"Yet she is my grandfather's wife!"

"An irreparable misfortune. I can't expose her life to him; such a blow to his pride might be his death, at his age. No! events must take their course; but I hope he will not take her to any place where she is likely to be recognized. Nor do I think he will. He is aging fast, and will be likely to live quietly at Rockhold."

"And I think she also would avoid such risks. She

was terribly frightened when she recognized the Dean of Olivet. Was he really her stepfather, the once poor curate?"

"Yes. You see, while they were lionizing him in the Eastern cities, his portrait, with a short biographical notice, was published in one of the illustrated weeklies, where I read of him, and identified him by comparing notes with what I had heard."

"How came he to rise so high?"

"Oh, he was a learned divine and eloquent orator. He was well connected, too. It would seem that a very few months after his stepdaughter's flight he was inducted into that rich living for which he had been waiting so many years. From that position his rise was slow indeed, covering a period of twenty years, until a few months ago, when he was made Dean of Olivet."

"To think that a man capable of quarreling with his wife, and ill-using their stepchild should fill so sacred a position in the church!" exclaimed Cora.

"Yes; but you see, my dear, the church is his profession, not his vocation. He is a brilliant pulpit orator, with influential friends; but every brilliant pulpit orator is not necessarily a saint. And as for his quarreling with his wife and ill-using their stepdaughter, we have heard but one side of that story."

When they entered the Rockhold drawing room they found Mrs. Rockharrt alone. She arose and came forward and received them with a smile.

"Your grandfather, my dear," she explained to Cora,

"came home later than usual from North End, and very much more than usually fatigued. Immediately after dinner he lay down and I left him asleep."

"Where is Uncle Clarence?" inquired Corona.

"He remains at the works for the night. Will you have this chair, love?" said Rose, pulling forward a luxurious "sleepy hollow."

"No, thank you. I must go to my room and change my dress. Will you excuse me for half an hour, Uncle Fabian?" inquired Cora.

"Most willingly, my dear," replied Mr. Fabian, with a very pleased look. Cora left the room.

"I will go with you," exclaimed Rose, turning pale and starting up to follow the young lady.

"No. You will not," said Mr. Fabian, in a tone of authority, as he laid his hand heavily on the woman's shoulder. "Sit down. I have something to say to you."

CHAPTER VI

FABIAN AND ROSE

"WHAT do you mean?"

"I should rather ask what do you mean, or rather what did you mean, by daring to marry any honest man, and of all men—Aaron Rockharrt? It was the most audacious challenging of destruction that the most reckless desperado could venture upon." Fabian Rockharrt continued mercilessly:

"Do you not know what, if Mr. Rockharrt were to discover the deception you put upon him, he might do and think himself justified in doing to you?"

Rose shuddered in silence.

"The very least that he would do would be to turn you out of his house, without a dollar, and shut his doors on you forever. Then what would become of you? Who would take you in?"

"Oh, Fabian!" she screamed at last. "Do not talk to me so. You will frighten me into hysterics."

"Now don't make a noise. For if you do, you will precipitate the catastrophe that you fear. Be quiet, I beg you," said Mr. Fabian, composedly, putting his thumbs in his vest pockets and leaning back.

"Why do you say such cruel things to me, then? Such inconsistent things, too. If I was good enough to marry you, I was good enough to marry your father."

"But you were never good enough to marry either of us, my dear. If you will take a little time to reflect on your antecedents, you will acknowledge that you were not quite good enough to marry any honest man," said Mr. Fabian, coolly.

"Yet you asked me to marry you," she said, sobbing softly, with her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Beg pardon, my dear. I think the asking was rather on the other side. You were very urgent that we should be married, and that our betrothal should be formally announced."

"Yes; because you led me to believe that you were going to marry me."

"Excuse me. I never led you to believe so, simply allowed you to believe so. What could a gentleman do under the circumstances? He couldn't contradict a lady."

"Oh, what a prevarication, Fabian Rockharrt, when every word, every deed, every look you bestowed on me went to assure me that you loved me and wished to marry me!"

"Softly, my dear. Softly. I was sorry for you and generous to you. I gave you the use of a pretty little house and a sufficient income during good behavior. But you were ungrateful to me, Rose. You were unkind to me."

"I was not. I would have married you. I could not have done more than that."

"But, my dear, your good sense must have told you that I could not marry you. I have done the best I could by you always. Twice I rescued you from ruin. Once when you were but little more than a child, and your boy-lover, or husband, had left you alone, a young stranger in a strange land—a girl friendless, penniless, beautiful, and so in deadly peril of perdition, I took you on your own representation, and introduced you into my own family as the governess of my niece. I became responsible for you."

"And did I not try my best to please everybody?" sobbed the woman.

"That you did," heartily responded Mr. Fabian. "And everybody loved you. So that, at the end of five years' service, when my niece was to enter a finishing school, and you were to go to another situation, you took with you the best testimonials from my father and mother and from the minister of our parish. But you did not keep your second situation long."

"How could I? I was but half taught. The Warrens would have had me teach their children French and German, and music on the harp and the piano. I knew no language but my own, and no music except that of the piano, which the dear, gentle lady, your mother, taught me out of the kindness of her heart. I was told that I must leave at the end of the term. And my term was nearly out when Captain Stillwater became a daily

visitor to the house, and I saw him every evening. He was a tall, handsome man, with a dark complexion and black hair and beard. And I always did admire that sort of a man. Indeed, that was the reason why I always admired you."

"Don't attempt to flatter me."

"I am not flattering anybody. I am telling you why I liked Captain Stillwater. And he was always so good to me! I told him all my troubles. And he sympathized with me! And when I told him that I should be obliged to leave my situation at the end of the quarter, he bade me never mind. And he asked me to be his wife. I did consent to be his wife. I was glad of the chance to get a husband and a home. So all was arranged. He advised me not to tell the Warrens that we were to be married, however. So at the end of my quarter I went away to a hotel, where Captain Stillwater came for me and took me away to the church where we were married."

"You had no knowledge that Alfred Whyte was dead, and that you were free to wed!"

"He had been lost seven years and was as good as dead to me! Besides, when a man is missing and has not been heard of for seven years, his wife is free to marry again, is she not?"

"No. She has good grounds for a divorce, that is all! To risk a second marriage without these legal formalities, would be dangerous! Might be disastrous! The first husband might turn up and make trouble!"

"I did not know that! But, after all, as it turned out, it did not matter!" sighed Rose.

"Not in the least!" assented Mr. Fabian, amiably.

"After all, it was not my fault! I married him in good faith; I did, indeed!"

"Did you tell him of your previous marriage? That is what you have not told me yet!"

"N-n-no; I was afraid if I did he might break off with me."

"Ah!"

"And I was in such extremity for the want of a home."

"Had not my father and mother told you that if ever you should find yourself out of a situation, you should come to them? Why did you not take them at their word? They had always been very kind to you, and they would have given you a warm welcome and a happy home. Now, why need you have rushed into a reckless marriage for a home?"

"Oh, Fabian!" she exclaimed, impatiently, "don't pretend to talk like an idiot, for you are not one! Don't talk to me as if I were a wax doll or a wooden woman, for you know I am not one!"

"I am sure I do not know what you mean!"

"Well, then, I loved the man! There, it is out! I loved him more than I ever loved any one else in the whole world! And I was afraid of losing him!"

"And so it was because you loved him so well that you deceived him so much!"

"Didn't he deceive me much more?"

"There were a pair of you—well matched! So well, it seems a pity that you were parted!"

"Oh, how very unkind you are to me!"

"Not yet unkind! Only waiting to see how you are going to behave!"

"I have never behaved badly! I was not wicked; I was unhappy! Unhappy from my birth, almost! I had no evil designs against anybody. I only wanted to be happy and to see people happy. I honestly believed I was lawfully married to Captain Stillwater. He took me to the Wirt House and registered our names as Mr. and Mrs. Stillwater. And we were very happy until his ship sailed. He gave me plenty of money before he went away; but I was heartbroken to part with him, and could take no pleasure in anything until I got a little used to his absence."

"I think you told me that you met him once more before your final separation. When was that meeting? Eh?"

"Fabian Rockharrt, are you trying to catch me in a falsehood? You know very well that I never told you anything of the sort. I told you that I never saw him again after he sailed away that autumn day! I waited all the autumn and heard nothing from him. I wrote to him often, but none of my letters were answered. At length I longed so much to see him that I grew wild and reckless and resolved to follow him. I took passage in the second cabin of the *Africa* and sailed for Liverpool,

where I arrived about the middle of December. I went to the agency of the Blue Star Line, to which his ship belonged, and inquired where he was to be found. They told me he had sailed for Calcutta and had taken his wife with him! It turned me to stone—to stone, Fabian—almost! I remember I sat down on a bench and felt numb and cold. And then I asked how long he had been married—hoping, if it was true, that my own was the first and the lawful union. They told me, for ten years, but as they had no family, his wife usually accompanied him on all his voyages. So she had now gone with him to Calcutta."

"I suspect the people in that office were pretty well acquainted with the handsome skipper's 'ways and manners,' and that they understood your case at once."

"I do really believe they did," said Rose; "for they looked at me so strangely, and one man, who seemed to be a porter or a messenger, or something of that sort, said something about a sailor having a wife at every port."

"So, after that you came back to New York, and did, at last, what you should have done at first—you wrote to me."

"There was no one on earth to whom, under the peculiar circumstances, I could have written but to you. Oh, Fabian! to whom else could I appeal?"

"And did I not respond promptly to your call?"

"Indeed you did, like a true knight, as you were. And I did not deceive you by any false story, Fabian.

I told you all—everything—how basely I had been deceived—and you soothed and consoled me, and told me that, as I had not sinned intentionally, I had not sinned at all; and you brought me with you to the State capital, and established me comfortably there."

"But you were very ungrateful, my dear. You took everything; gave nothing."

"I would have given you myself in marriage, but you would not have me. You did not think me good enough for you."

"But, bless my wig, child! for your age you had been too much married already—a great deal too much married! You had got into the habit of getting married."

"Oh! how merciless you are to me!" Rose said, beginning to weep.

"No; I am not. I have never been unkind to you—as yet. I don't know what I may be! My course toward you will depend very much upon yourself. Have I not always hitherto been your best friend? Ungrateful, unresponsive though you were at that time, did I not procure for you an invitation from my mother to accompany her party on that long, delightful summer trip?"

"I had an impression at the time that I owed the invitation to you father, who suggested to your mother to write and ask me to accompany them."

Mr. Fabian looked surprised and said—for he never hesitated to tell a fib:

"Oh! that was quite a mistake. It was I myself who

suggested the invitation. I thought it would be agreeable to you. Was it not I myself who sent you forward in advance to the Wirt House, Baltimore, there to await the arrival of our party, and join us in our summer travel? And didn't you have a long, delightful tour with us through the most sublime scenery in the most salubrious climates on earth? Didn't you return a perfect Hebe in health and bloom?"

"I acknowledge all that. I acknowledge all my obligations to your family; but at the same time I declare that I also did my part. I was as a white slave to your parents. I was lady's maid to your mother, foot boy to your father. I don't know, indeed, what the old people would have done without me, for no hired servant could have served them as faithfully as I did."

"Oh, yes; you were grateful and devoted to all the family except to me, your best friend—to me, who gave you the use of a lovely home, and a liberal income, and a faithful friendship; and then trusted in your sense of justice for my reward."

"I would have given you all I possessed in the world—my own poor self in marriage—and you led me on to believe that you wished to marry me, but, finally, you would not have me. You went off and married another woman."

"Bah! we are talking around in a circle, and getting back to where we began. Let us come to the point."

"Very well; come to the point," said Rose, sulkily.

"Listen, then: It is not for your reckless elopement

with your stepfather's pupil, when you were driven from home by cruelty; it is not for your false marriage with Stillwater, when you yourself were deceived; but because with all these antecedents against you—antecedents which constituted you, however unjustly, a pariah, who should have lived quietly and obscurely, but who, instead of doing so, took advantage of kindness shown her, and betrayed the family who sheltered her by luring into a disgraceful marriage its revered father, and bringing to deep dishonor the gray head of Aaron Rockharrt, a man of stern integrity and unblemished reputation—you should be denounced and punished."

"Oh, Fabian, have mercy! have mercy! You would not now, after years of friendship, you would not now ruin me?"

"Listen to me! You checkmated me in that matter of the cottage and the income. Yes, simple as you seem, and sharp as I may appear, you certainly managed to take all and give nothing. And when you found out that you could not take my hand and my name, you waylaid me at the railway station, when I was on my wedding tour, and you swore to be revenged. I laughed at you. I advised you to be anything rather than dramatic. I never imagined the possibility of your threatened revenge taking the form of your marriage. Well, my dear, you have your revenge, I admit; but in your blindness, you could not see that revenge itself might be met by retribution! One man kills another for re-

venge, and does not, in his blind fury, see the gallows looming in the distance."

"What do you mean? You cannot hang me for marrying your father," exclaimed Rose.

"No; don't raise your voice, or you may be heard. No, Rose, I cannot hang you for treachery; but, my dear, there are worse fates than neat and tidy hanging, which is over in a few minutes. I could expose your past life to my father. You know him, and you know that he would show no ruth, no mercy to deception and treachery such as yours. You know that he would turn you out of the house without money or character, destitute and degraded. What then would be your fate at your age—a fading rose past thirty-seven years old? Sooner or later, and very little later, the poorhouse or the hospital. Better a sweet, tidy little hanging and be done with it, if possible."

"You are a fiend to talk to me so! a fiend! Fabian Rockharrt," exclaimed Rose, bursting into hysterical sobs and tears.

"Now be quiet, my child; you'll raise the house, and then there will be an explosion."

"I don't care if there will be. You are cruel, savage, barbarous! I never meant to do any harm by marrying Mr. Rockharrt. I never meant to be revenged on you or anybody. I only said so because I was so excited by your desertion of me. I married the old gentleman for a refuge from the world. I meant to do my duty by him, though he is as cross as a bear with a bruised head.

But do your worst; I don't care. I would just as lief die as live. I am tired of trying to be good; tired of trying to please people; tired, oh, very tired, of living!"

"Come, come," said soft-hearted Mr. Fabian; "none of that nonsense. Place yourself in my hands, to be guided by me and to work for my interests, and none of these evils shall happen to you. You shall live and die in wealth and luxury, my father's honored wife, the mistress of Rockhold."

He spoke slowly, tenderly, caressingly, and as she listened to him her sobs and tears subsided and she grew calmer.

"What is it you want me to do for you? What can I do for you, indeed, powerless as I am?" she inquired at last.

"You must use all your influence with my father in my interests, and use it discreetly and perseveringly," he whispered.

"But I have no influence. Never was the young wife of an old man—and I am young in comparison to him—treated so harshly. I am not his pet, I am his slave!" she complained.

"But you must obtain influence over him. You can do that. You are with him night and day when he is not at his business. You are his shadow—beg pardon, I ought to have said his sunshine."

"I am his slave, I tell you."

"Then be his humble, submissive, obedient slave; be-

tray no disappointment, discontent or impatience at your lot. The harsher he is, the humbler must you be; the more despotic he becomes, the more subservient you must seem. Make yourself so perfectly complying in all his moods that he shall believe you to be the very 'perfect rose of womanhood,' more excellent even than he thought when he married you, and so as he grows older and weaker in mind as well as body you will gain not only influence but ascendency over him, and these you must use in my interest."

"But how? I don't understand."

"Pay attention, then, and you will understand. Mr. Rockharrt is aged. In the course of nature he must soon pass away. He has made no will. Should he die intestate, the whole property, by the laws of this commonwealth, would fall to pieces; that is to say, it would be divided into three parts—one-third would go to you——"

Rose started, caught her breath, and stared at the speaker; the greed of gain dilating her great blue eyes. The third of the Rockharrts' fabulous wealth to be hers at her husband's death! Amazing! How many millions or tens of millions would that be? Incredible! And all for her, and she with, perhaps, half a century of life to live and enjoy it! What a vista!

"Why do you stare at me so?" demanded Mr. Fabian.

"Because I was so surprised. That is not the law in England. In England there are usually what are called

marriage settlements, which make a suitable provision for the wife, but leave the bulk of the property to go to the children—generally to the oldest son."

"And such should be the law here, but it isn't; and so if my father should die without having made a will, the great estate would break, as I said, into three parts —one part would be yours, the other two parts would be divided into three shares, to me, to my brother, and to the heirs of my sister. The business at North End would probably be carried on by Aaron Rockharrt's sons."

"But would not that be equitable?" inquired Rose, who had no mind to have her third interfered with.

"It would not be expedient, nor is such a disposition of his property the intention of Aaron Rockharrt. I know, from what he has occasionally hinted, that he means to bequeath the Great North End Works to me and my brother Clarence, share and share alike; but he puts off making this will, which indeed must never be made. The North End Works should not be a monster with two heads, but a colossus with one head—with my head. So that I wish my father to make a will leaving the North End Works to me exclusively—to me alone as the one head."

"I think if I dared to suggest such a thing to him, he would take off my head!" said Rose, with grim humor.

"I think he would if you should do so suddenly or clumsily. But you must insinuate the idea very slowly

and subtlely. Clarence is not for the works; Clarence is too good for this world—at least for the business of this world. I think him half an imbecile! My father does not hesitate to call him a perfect idiot. Do you begin to see your way now? Clarence can be moderately provided for, but should have no share in the North End Works."

"The North End Works to be left to you solely; Clarence to be moderately provided for; and what of the two children of the late Mrs. Haught?"

"Oh! my father never intends to leave them more than a modest legacy. They have each inherited money from their father. No; understand me once for all, Rose. I must be the sole heir of all my father's wealth, with the exceptions I have named, and the sole successor to his business, without any exception whatever. You must live, serve him and bear with him only to obtain such an ascendency over him as to induce him to make such a will as I have dictated to you. You can do this. You can insinuate it so subtlely that he will never suspect the suggestion came from you. I say you can do this, and you must do it. The woman who could deceive and entrap old Aaron Rockharrt, the Iron King, into matrimony, can do anything else in the world that she pleases to do with him if only she will be as subtle, as patient, and as complacent to him after marriage as she had been before marriage."

"If Clarence is to be so provided for, Cora and Sylvan

to have modest legacies, and you to have the huge bulk of the estate—where is my third to come from?"

"Why, my dear, I could never let you have so vast a slice out of the mammoth fortune! Your third of the estate must follow Clarence's share of the business—into nothingness. You must play magnanimity, sacrifice your third, and content yourself with a suitable provision," said Fabian, equably.

"I will never do that! I would not do it to save your life, Fabian Rockharrt!"

"Oh, yes, you will, my darling. Not to save my life, but to save yourself from being denounced to Mr. Rockharrt, and turned out of this house, destitute and degraded."

"I don't care if I should be! Do you think me quite a baby in your hands? I have been reflecting since you have been talking to me. I have been remembering that you told me that the law gives the widow one third of her late husband's property when he dies intestate, and entitles her to it, no matter what sort of a will he makes."

"Unless there has been a settlement, my angel," said Mr. Fabian, composedly.

"Well, there has been no settlement in my case. So whether Aaron Rockharrt should die intestate, or whether he should make a will,. I am sure of my lawful third. So I defy you, Mr. Fabian Rockharrt. You may denounce me to your father. He may turn me out of doors without a penny, and 'without a character,' as the

servants say, but he cannot divorce me, because I have been faithful to him ever since our marriage. I could compel him by law to support me, even though he might not let me share his home. He would be obliged by law to give me alimony in proportion to his income, and, oh! what a magnificent revenue that would be for me—with freedom from this tyranny into the bargain! And at his death, which could not be long coming at his age, and after such a shock as his dutiful son proposes to give him, I should come in for my third. And, oh, where so rich a widow as I should be! With forty or fifty years of life before me in which to enjoy my fortune! Ah, you see, my clever Mr. Fabian Rockharrt, though you frightened me out of self-possession at first, when I come to think over the situation, I find that you can do me no great harm. If you should put your threats in execution and bring about a violent separation between myself and my husband, you would do me a signal favor, for I should gain my personal freedom, with a handsome alimony during his life, and at his death a third of his vast estate," she concluded, snapping her fingers in his face.

"I think not."

"Yes; I would."

"No; you would not."

"Indeed! Why should I not, pray?" she inquired, with mocking incredulity.

"Oh, because of a mere trifle in your code of morals—an insignificant impediment."

"Tchut!" she exclaimed, contemptuously. "Do you think me quite an idiot?"

"I think you would be much worse than an idiot if, in case of my father's discarding you, you should move an inch toward obtaining alimony or in the case of the coveted 'third.'"

"Pshaw! Why, pray?"

"Because you have not, and never can have, the shadow of a right to either."

"Bah! why not?"

"Because—Alfred Whyte is living!"

She caught her breath and gazed at the speaker with great dilating blue eyes.

"What—do—you—mean?" she faltered.

"Alfred Whyte, your husband of twenty years ago, is still living and likely to live—a very handsome man of forty years, residing at his magnificent country seat, Whyte Hall, Dulwich, near London."

"Married again?" she whispered, hoarsely.

"Certainly not; an English gentleman does not commit bigamy."

"How did you—become acquainted—with these facts?"

"I was sufficiently interested in you to seek him out, when I was in England. I discovered where he lived; also that he was looking out for the best investment of his idle capital. I called on him personally in the interests of our great enterprise. He is now a member of the London syndicate."

"Did you speak—of me?"

"Never mentioned your name. How could I, knowing as I did of the Stillwater episode in your story?"

"And he lives! Alfred Whyte lives! Oh, misery, misery, misery! Evil fate has followed me all the days of my life," moaned Rose, wringing her hands.

"Now, why should you take on so, because Whyte is living? Would you have had that fine, vigorous man, in the prime of his life, die for your benefit?"

"But I thought he was dead long ago."

"You were too ready to believe that, and to console yourself. He was more faithful to your memory."

"How do you know? You said my name was never mentioned between you."

"Not from him, but from a mutual acquaintance, of whom I asked how it was that Mr. Whyte had never married, I heard that he had grieved for her out of all reason and had ever remained faithful to the memory of his first and only love. My own inference was, and is, that the report of your death was got up by his friends to break off the connection."

"And you never told this 'mutual friend' that I still lived?"

"How could I, my dear, with my knowledge of your Stillwater affair? No, no; I was not going to disturb the peace of a good man by telling him that his child-wife of twenty years ago was still living, but lost to him

by a fall far worse than death. No—I let you remain dead to him."

"Oh, misery! misery! misery! I would to Heaven I were dead to everybody! dead, dead indeed!" she cried, wringing her hands in anguish.

"Come, come, don't be a fool! You see that you are utterly in my power and must do my will. Do it, and you will come to no harm; but live and die in a luxurious home."

CHAPTER VII

SYLVAN'S ORDERS

While the amiable Mr. Fabian was engaged in soothing the woman whom he was resolved to make his instrument in gaining the whole of his father's great business bequeathed to him by will, carriage wheels were heard grating on the gravel of the drive leading up to the front door of the house, and a few minutes afterward the master's knock was answered by the hall waiter, and old Aaron Rockharrt strode into the drawing room.

"I did not know that you had gone out again. I left you on the library sofa asleep," said Rose, deferentially, as she sprang up to meet him.

"I was called out on business that don't concern you. Ah, Fabian! How is it that I find you here to-night?" inquired the Iron King, as he threw himself into a chair.

"I brought Cora home from the Banks," replied the eldest son.

"Ah! how is Mrs. Fabian?"

"Still delicate. I can scarcely hope that she will be stronger for some weeks yet."

"When are you going to bring her to call on my wife?" demanded the Iron King, bending his gray brows somewhat angrily and looking suspiciously on his son; for he was not pleased that his daughter-in-law's visit of ceremony had been so long delayed.

"As soon as she is able to leave the house. Our physician has forbidden her to take any long walk or ride for some time yet."

"And how long is this seclusion to last?"

"Until after a certain event to take place at the end of three months."

"Ah! and then another month for convalescence! So it will be late in the autumn before we can hope to see Mrs. Fabian Rockharrt at Rockhold."

"I fear so, indeed, sir."

"I do not approve of this petting, coddling, and indulging women. It makes the weak creatures weaker. If you choose to seclude your wife or allow her to seclude herself on account of a purely physiological condition, I will not allow Mrs. Rockharrt to go near her until she goes to return her call."

When Cora reached her chamber that evening she sat down to reflect on all that her Uncle Fabian had told her of the past history of her grandfather's young wife, and to anticipate the possible movements of her brother. Her own life, since the loss of her husband—now loved so deeply, though loved too late—she felt was over. The future had nothing for herself. What, therefore, could

she do with the dull years in which she might long vegetate through life but to give them in useful service to those who needed help? She would go with her brother to the frontier, and find some field of labor among the Indians. She would found a school with her fortune, and devote her life to the education of Indian children. And she would call the school by her lost husband's name, and so make of it a monument to his memory.

Revolving these plans in her mind, Cora Rothsay retired to rest. The next morning she arose at her usual hour, dressed, and went downstairs.

Old Aaron Rockharrt and his young wife were already in the parlor, waiting for the breakfast bell to ring.

She had but just greeted them when the call came, and all moved toward the breakfast room.

Just as the three had seated themselves at the table, and while Rose was pouring out the coffee, the sound of carriage wheels was heard approaching the house, and a few minutes later Mr. Clarence and Sylvan entered the breakfast room with joyous bustle.

"What—what—what does this unseemly excitement mean?" sternly demanded the Iron King, while Cora arose to shake hands with her uncle and brother; and while Rose, fearful of doing wrong, did nothing at all.

"What is the matter? What has happened? Why have you left the works at this hour of the morning, Clarence?" he requested of his son.

"I came with Sylvan, sir, for the last time before he

leaves us for distant and dangerous service, and for an unlimited period."

"Ah! you have your orders, then?" said Mr. Rockharrt, in a somewhat mollified tone.

"Yes, sir," said the young lieutenant. "I received my commission by the earliest mail this morning, with orders to report for duty to Colonel Glennin, of the Third Regiment of Infantry, now at Governor's Island, New York harbor, and under orders to start for Fort Farthermost, on the Mexican fontier. I must leave to-night in order to report in time."

Cora looked at him with the deepest interest.

Rose thought now she might venture on a little civility without giving offense to her despotic lord.

"Have you had breakfast, you two?" she inquired.

"No, indeed. We started immediately after receiving the orders," said Sylvan. "And we are as hungry as two bears."

"Bring chairs to the table, Mark, for the gentlemen," said young Mrs. Rockharrt, who then rang for two more covers and hot coffee.

"Cora," whispered Sylvan, as soon as he got a chance to speak to his sister, "you can never get ready to go with me on so short a notice. Women have so much to do."

"Sylvan," she replied, "I have been ready for a month."

CHAPTER VIII

SOMETHING UNEXPECTED

The day succeeding that on which Sylvanus Haught had received his commission as second lieutenant in the Third Regiment of Infantry, then on Governor's Island, New York harbor, and under orders for Fort Farthermost, on the southwestern frontier, was a very busy one for Cora Rothsay; for, however well she had been prepared for a sudden journey, there were many little final details to be attended to which would require all the time she had left at her disposal.

A farewell visit must be paid to Violet Rockharrt, and—worse than all—an explanatory interview must be held with her grandfather in relation to her departure with Sylvanus Haught, and that interview must be held before the Iron King should leave Rockhold that morning for his daily visit to the works.

Cora had often, during the last year, and oftener since her grandfather's second marriage, taken occasion to allude to her intention of accompanying her brother to his post of duty, however distant and dangerous that post might be. She had done this with the fixed pur-

pose of preparing this autocratic old gentleman's mind for the event.

Now, the day of her intended departure had arrived; she was to leave Rockhold with her brother that afternoon to take the evening express to New York. And as she could not go without taking leave of her grandfather, it was necessary that she should announce her intention to him before he should start on his daily visit to North End.

Therefore Cora had risen very early that morning and had gone down into the little office or library of the Iron King, that was situated at the rear of the middle hall, there to wait for him, as it was his custom to rise early and go into his study, to look over the papers before breakfast. These papers were brought by a special messenger from North End, who started from the depot as soon as the earliest train arrived with the morning's mail and reached Rockhold by seven o'clock.

She had not sat there many minutes before Mr. Rockharrt entered the study.

"I am going away with my brother," Cora said, without any preface whatever, "to Fort Farthermost, on the southwestern Indian frontier."

"I think you must be crazy."

"Dear grandpa, this is no impulsive purpose of mine. I have thought of it ever since—ever since—the death of my dear husband," said Cora, in a broken voice.

"Oh! the death of your dear husband?" he exclaimed, rudely interrupting her. "Much you cared for the

death of your dear husband! If you had, you would never have driven him forth to his death! for that is what you did! You cannot deceive me now. As long as the fate of Rule Rothsay was a mystery, I was myself at somewhat of a loss to account for his disappearance —though I suspected you even then—but when the news came that he had been killed by the Comanches near the boundaries of Mexico, and I had time to reflect on it all, I knew that he had been driven away by you—you! And all for the sake of a titled English dandy! You need not deny it, Cora Rothsay!"

"It would be quite useless to deny anything that you choose to assert, sir," replied the young lady, coldly but respectfully. "Yet I must say this, that I loved and honored my husband more than I ever did or ever can love and honor any other human being. His departure broke my spirit, and his death has nearly broken my heart—certainly it has blasted my future. My life is worth nothing, nothing to me, except as I make it useful to those who need my help."

"Rubbish!" exclaimed old Aaron Rockharrt, turning over the leaves of his paper and looking for the financial column.

"Grandfather, please hear me patiently for a few minutes, for after to-day I do not know that we may ever meet again," pleaded Cora.

The old man laid his open paper on his knees, set his spectacles up on his head, and looked at her.

"What the devil do you mean?" he slowly inquired.

"Sir, I am to leave Rockhold with my brother this afternoon, to go with him, first to Governor's Island, and within a few days start with him for the distant frontier fort which may be his post of duty for many years to come. We may not be able to return within your lifetime, grandfather," said Cora, gravely and tenderly.

"And what, in Satan's name, unless you are stark mad, should take you out to the Indian frontier?" he demanded.

"I might answer, to be with my only brother, I being his only sister."

"Bosh! Men's wives very seldom accompany them to these savage posts, much less their sisters! What does a young officer want his sister tagging after him for?"

"It is not that Sylvan especially wants me, nor for his sake alone that I go."

"Well, then, what in the name of lunacy do you go for?"

"That I may devote my time and fortune to a good cause—to the education of Indian girls and boys. I mean to build——"

"That, or something like that, was what Rothsay tried to do when you drove him away, as if he had been a leper, to the desert. Well, go on! What next? Let us hear the whole of the mad scheme!"

"I mean to build a capacious schoolhouse, in which I will receive, board, lodge, and teach as many Indian

children as may be intrusted to me, until the house shall be full."

"Moonstruck mania! That is what your mad husband, driven mad by you, attempted on a smaller scale, and failed."

"That is why I wish to do this. I wish to follow in his footsteps. It is the best thing I can do to honor his memory."

"But he was murdered for his pains."

Cora shuddered and covered her face with her hands for a space; then she answered, slowly:

"There may be many failures; but there will never be any success unless the failures are made stepping stones to final victory."

"Fudge! See here, mistress! No doubt you suffer a good many stings of conscience for having driven the best man that ever lived—except, hem! well—to his death! But you need not on that account expatriate yourself from civilization, to go out to try to teach those red devils who murdered your husband and burned his hut, and who will probably murder you and burn your schoolhouse! You have been a false woman and a miserable sinner, Cora Rothsay! And you have deserved to suffer and you have suffered, there is no doubt about that! But you have repented, and may be pardoned. You need not immolate yourself at your age. You are a mere girl. You will get over your morbid grief. You may marry again."

Cora slowly, sadly, silently, shook her head.

"Oh, yes; you will."

"No, no; no, dear grandpa. I will bear my dear lost husband's name to the end of my life, and it shall be inscribed on my tomb. Ah! would to Heaven that at the last, I might lay my ashes beside his," she moaned.

"Now, don't be a confounded fool, Cora Rothsay! To be sure, all women are fools! But, then, a girl with a drop of my blood in her veins should not be such a consummate idiot as you are showing yourself to be. You shall not go out with Sylvan to that savage frontier. It is no place for a woman, particularly for an unmarried woman. You would come to a bad end. I shall speak to Sylvan. I shall forbid him to take you there," said the old autocrat.

Cora smiled, but answered nothing. She had firmly made up her mind to go with her brother, whether her grandfather should approve the action or not; but she thought it unnecessary to dispute the matter with him just now.

"So, mistress, you will stay here, under my guardianship, until you accept a husband, like a respectable woman," continued old Aaron Rockharrt.

Still Cora remained silent, standing by his chair, with her hand resting on the table, and her eyes cast down.

The egotist seemed not to object to having all the talk to himself.

"Come!" he exclaimed, with sudden animation, sitting bolt upright in his chair. "When I found you in this room just now, you said you had something to tell

me. And you told it. Naturally, it was not worth hearing. Now, then, I have something to tell you, which is so well worth hearing that when you have heard it your missionary madness may be cured, and your Quixotic expedition given up; in fact, all your plans in life changed—a splendid prospect opened before you."

Cora looked up, her languor all gone, her interest aroused. Something was rising in her mind; not a sun of hope—ah! no—but nebula, obscure, unformed, indistinct, yet with possible suns of hope, worlds of happiness, within it. What did her grandfather mean? Had he heard something about—— Was Rule yet——

Swift as lightning flashed these thoughts through her mind while her grandfather drew his breath between his utterances.

"Listen! This is what I had to tell you: I had a letter a few days ago from an old suitor of yours," he said, looking keenly at his granddaughter.

Cora's eyes fell, her spirits drooped. The nebula of unknown hopes and joys had faded away, leaving her prospect dark again. She looked depressed and disappointed. She could feel no shadow of interest in her old suitors.

"I received this letter several days since, and being at leisure just then, I answered it. But in the pressure of some important matters I forgot to tell you of it, though it concerned yourself mostly, I might say entirely. Shouldn't have remembered it now, I suppose, if it had not been for your foolish talk about going out for a

missionary to the savages. Ah! another destiny awaits your acceptance."

Cora sighed in silence.

"Now, then. Of course you must know who this correspondent is."

"Without offense to you, grandfather, I neither know nor care," languidly replied the lady.

"But it is not without offense to me. You are the most eccentric and inconsistent woman I ever met in all the course of my life. You are not constant even to your inconstancy."

Having uttered this paradox, the old man threw himself back in his chair and gazed at his granddaughter.

"I am not yet clear as to your meaning, sir," she said, coldly, but respectfully.

"What! Have you quite forgotten the titled dandy for whom you were near breaking your heart three years ago? For whom you were ready to throw over one of the best and truest men that ever lived? For whom you really did drive Regulas Rothsay, on the proudest and happiest day of his life, into exile and death!"

"Oh, don't! dont! grandfather! Don't!" wailed Cora, sinking on an office stool, and dropping her hands and head on the table.

"Now, none of that, mistress. No hysterics, if you please. I won't permit any woman about me to indulge in such tantrums. Listen to me, ma'am. My correspondent was young Cumbervale, the noodle!"

"Then I never wish to see or hear or think of him again!" exclaimed Cora.

"Indeed! But that is a woman all through. She will do or suffer anything to get her own way. She will defy all her friends and relations, all principles of truth and honor; she will move Heaven and earth, go through fire and water, to get her own way; and when she does get it she don't want it, and she won't have it."

"Grandfather!" pleaded Cora.

"Silence! Three years ago you would have walked over all our dead bodies, if necessary, to marry that noble booby. And you would have married him if it had not been for me! I would not permit you to wed him then, because you were in honor bound to Regulas Rothsay. I shall insist on your accepting him now, because poor Rothsay is in his grave, and this will be the best thing to do for you to help you out of harm's way from redskins and rattlesnakes and other reptiles. I don't think much of the fellow; but he seems to be a harmless idiot, and is good enough for you."

Cora answered never a word, but she felt quite sure that not even the iron will of the Iron King could ever coerce her into marriage with any man, least of all with the man whose memory was identified with her heart's tragedy. The old man continued his monologue.

"The best thing about the fellow is his constancy. He was after your imaginary fortune once. I am sure of that. And he was so dazzled by the illumination of that *ignis fatuus* that he didn't see you, perhaps, and

didn't recognize how much he really cared for you. At all events, in his letter to me—and, by the way, it is very strange that he should write to me after the snubbing I gave him in London," said the Iron King, reflectively.

Cora did not think that was strange. She, at least, felt sure that it was as impossible for the young duke to take offense at the rudeness of the old iron man as at the raging of a dog or the tearing of a bull. But she did not drop a hint of this to the egotist, who never imagined passive insolence to be at the bottom of the duke's forbearance.

"In his letter to me," resumed old Aaron Rockharrt, "the young fool tells me that, immediately after his great disappointment in being rejected by you, he left England—and, indeed, Europe—and traveled through every accessible portion of Asia and Africa, in the hope of overcoming his misplaced affection, but in vain, for that he returned home at the end of two years with his heart unchanged. There he learned through the newspapers that you had been recently widowed, through the murder of your husband in an Indian mutiny. That's how he put it. He further wrote that, in the face of such a tragedy as that, he felt bound to forbear the faintest approach toward resuming his acquaintance with you until some considerable time should have elapsed, although, he was careful to add, he always believed that you had given him your heart, and would have given him your hand had you been permitted to do so. He ended his letter by asking me to give him your address,

that he might write to you. He evidently supposed you to be keeping house for yourself, as English widows of condition usually do. Well, my girl, what do you think I did?"

"You told me, sir, that, being at leisure just then, you answered his letter immediately," coldly replied Cora.

"Yes; and I told him that you were living with me. I gave him the full address. And I told him that I was pleased with his frankness and fidelity, qualities which I highly approved; and I added that if he wished to renew his suit to you, he need not waste time in writing, but that he might come over and court you in person here at Rockhold, where he should receive a hearty, old-fashioned welcome."

Cora gazed at the old man aghast.

"Oh, grandfather, you never wrote that!" she exclaimed.

"I never wrote that? What do you mean, mistress? Am I in the habit of saying what is not true?"

"Oh, no; but I am so grieved that you should have written such a letter."

"Why, pray?"

"Because I cannot bear that any one should think for a moment that I could every marry again."

"Rubbish!"

"Well, it does not matter after all. If the duke should come on this fool's errand, I shall be far enough out of his reach," thought Cora; but she said no more.

The breakfast bell rang out with much clamor, and the old man arose growling.

"And now you have cheated me out of my hour with the newspapers by your foolish talk. Come, come to breakfast and let us hear no more nonsense about going on that wild goose chase to the Indian frontier."

At the end of the morning meal he arose from the table, called his young wife to fetch him his hat, his gloves, his duster, and other belongings, and he got ready for his daily morning drive to the works.

"I shall remain at North End to bid you good-by, Sylvan. Call at my office there on your way to the depot," he said, as he left the house to step into his carriage waiting at the door.

As the sound of the wheels rolled off and died in the distance, Rose turned to Cora, and inquired:

"My dear, does he know that you are going out West with Sylvan?"

"He should know it. I have spoken freely of my plans before you both for months past," said Cora.

"But, my dear, he never took the slightest notice of anything you said on that subject. Why, he did not even seem to hear you."

"He heard me perfectly. Nothing passes in my grandfather's presence that he does not see and hear and understand."

"Well, then, I reckon he thinks you have changed your mind; for he spoke of meeting Sylvan at North End to bid him good-by, but said not a word about you."

"He will believe that I am going when he sees me with Sylvan," said Cora.

And then she touched the bell and ordered her carriage to be brought to the door.

"We must go and take leave of Mrs. Fabian Rockharrt," she said to Rose.

Twenty minutes later Cora and Sylvan entered the pony carriage. Sylvan took the reins and started for Violet Banks.

They soon reached the lovely villa, where they found Violet seated in a Quaker rocking chair on the front porch, with a basket workstand beside her, busily and happily engaged in her beloved work—embroidering an infant's white cashmere cloak. She jumped up, dropped her work, and ran to meet her visitors as they alighted from the carriage. She kissed Cora rapturously, and Sylvan kissed her.

"How lovely of you both to come! Wait a minute till I call a boy to take your chaise around to the stable. And, oh, sit down. You are going to stay all day with me, too, and late into the night—there is a fine moon to-night. Or maybe you will stay a week or a month. Why not? Oh, do stay," she rattled on, a little incoherently on account of her happy excitement.

"No, dear," said Cora, "we can only stay a very few minutes. The rising moon will see us far away on our route to New York."

"W-h-y! You astonish me! How sudden this is!

Where are you going?" asked Violet, pausing in her hurry to call a groom.

"Let me explain," said Cora, taking one of the Quaker chairs and seating herself. "Sylvan has just received his commission as second lieutenant in the Third Regiment of Infantry, now on Governor's Island, New York harbor, but under orders for Fort Farthermost, on the extreme frontier of the Indian Reserve. He leaves by the afternoon express, and I go with him."

"Cora!" exclaimed Violet, as she dropped into her chair. "I know you have talked about this, but I never thought you would do such a wild deed! Please don't think of going out among bears and Indians!"

"I must, dear, for many reasons. Sylvan and myself are all and all to each other at present, and we should not be parted. More than that, I wish to do something in the world. I cannot do anything here. I am not wanted, you see. I must, therefore, go where I may be wanted and may do some good."

"But what can you do—out there?"

Cora then explained her plan of establishing a missionary home and school for Indian children.

"What a good, great, but, oh, what a Quixotic plan! Sylvan, why will you let her do it?" pleaded Violet.

"My dear, I would not presume to oppose Cora. If she thinks she is right in this matter, then she is right. If her resolution is fixed, then I will uphold and defend her in that resolution," said the young lieutenant, loyally. But all the same his secret thought was that some

fine fellow in his own regiment might be able to persuade Cora to devote her time and fortune to him, instead of to the redskins.

After a little more talk Cora got up and kissed Violet good-by. Sylvan followed her example with a little more ardor than was absolutely necessary, perhaps.

At Rockhold luncheon was on the table, and young Mrs. Rockharrt waiting for them. Mr. Clarence was also at home, having determined to risk his father's displeasure and to neglect his business on this one day—this last day, for the sake of the niece, and the nephew who were so dear to his heart.

After luncheon Sylvan went out to oversee the loading of the farm van, which was drawn by two sturdy mules, with the many heavy trunks and boxes that contained Cora's wardrobe and books—among the latter a large number of elementary school books. Mr. Clarence stood by his side to help him in case of need. Cora went up to her room, where nothing was now left to be done but to pack her little traveling bag with the necessaries for her journey, and then put on her traveling suit. She had a quantity of valuable jewelry, but this she put carefully into her hand bag, intending to convert it all into money as soon as she should reach New York, and to consecrate the fund, with the bulk of her fortune, to her projected home school for the Indian children.

As she sat there, she was by some occult agency led to think of her grandfather's young wife—to think of

her tenderly, charitably, compassionately. Poor Rose! In infancy, from the day of her father's death, an unloved, neglected, persecuted child; in childhood, driven to desperation and elopement by the miseries of her home; in girlhood, deceived and abandoned by her lover; now, in womanhood, as friendless and unhappy as if she had not married a wealthy man, and was not living in a luxurious home. Poor Rose! She had lost her sense of honor, or she never would have married Mr. Rockharrt, even for a refuge. But, through all her sins and sorrows, she had not lost her tender heart, her sweet temper, or her amiable desire to serve and to please. She had now a hard time with her aged, despotic husband. He had not gratified her ambition by taking her into the upper circles of society, for he seemed now to have given up society; he had not pleased her harmless vanity with presents of fine dress and jewelry; no, nor even regarded her services with any sort of affectionate recognition.

Cora sat there feeling sorry that she had ever shown herself cold and haughty to the helpless creature who had always done all that she could to win her (Cora's) love, and whom she was about to leave to the tender mercies of a hard and selfish old man, who, though he highly approved of his young wife's meekness, humility, and subserviency, and held her up as an example to her whole sex, yet did not care for her, did not consult her wishes in anything, did not consider her happiness.

Cora sat wondering what she could do to give this

poor little soul some little pleasure before leaving her. Suddenly she thought of her jewels. She resolved to select a set and give it to Rose with some kind parting word.

She took her hand bag and withdrew from it case after case, examining each in turn. There was a set of diamonds worth many thousand dollars; a set of rubies and pearls, worth almost as much; a set of emeralds, very costly; but none of them as lovely as a set of sapphires, pearls, and diamonds, artistically arranged together, the sapphires encircled by a row of pearls, with an outer circle of small diamonds; the whole suggesting the blue color, the foam, and the sparkle of the sea.

This Cora selected as a parting present to her grandfather's young wife.

She took them in her hand and hurried to Rose's room, knocked at the door and entered. Rose was seated in a white dimity-covered arm chair, engaged in reading a novel. She looked surprised, and almost frightened, at the sight of Cora, who had never before condescended to enter this private room.

"Have I disturbed you?" inquired Cora.

"Oh, no; no, indeed. Pray come in. Please sit down. Will you have this arm chair?" eagerly inquired the young woman, rising from her seat.

"No, thank you, Rose; I have scarcely time to sit. I have brought you a keepsake which I hope you will sometimes wear in memory of your old pupil," said Cora, opening the casket and displaying the gems.

Rose's face was a study—all that was good and evil in her was aroused at the sight of the rich and costly jewels—vanity, cupidity, gratitude, tenderness.

"Oh, how superb they are! I never saw such splendid gems! A parure for a princess, and you give them to me? What a magnificent present! How kind you are, Cora! What can I do? How shall I ever be able to return your kindness?" said Rose, as tears of delight and wonder filled her eyes.

"Wear them and enjoy them. They suit your fair complexion very well. And now let me bid you good-by, here."

"No, no; not yet. I will go down and see you off—see the very last of you, Cora, until the carriage takes you out of sight. Oh, dear, it may indeed be the very last that I shall ever see of you, sure enough."

"I hope not. Why do you speak so sadly?"

"Because I am not strong. My father died of consumption; so did my elder brothers and sisters, the children of his first marriage, and often I think I shall follow them."

Mrs. Rothsay looked at the speaker. The transparent delicacy of complexion, the tenderness of the limpid blue eyes, the infantile softness of face, throat, and hands, certainly did not seem to promise much strength or long life; but Cora spoke cheerfully:

"Such hereditary weakness may be overcome in these days of science, Rose. You must banish fear and take

care of yourself. Now, I really must go and put on my bonnet."

"Very well, then, if you must. I will meet you in the hall. Oh, my dear, I am so very grateful to you for these precious jewels, and more than all for the friendship and kindness that prompted the gift," said Rose; and perhaps she really did believe that she prized the giver more than the gift; for such self-deception would have been in keeping with her superficial character.

Cora left the room and hurried to her chamber, where she put on her bonnet and her linen duster. She had scarcely fastened the last button when her brother knocked at the door, calling out:

"Come, Cora, come, or we shall miss the train."

Cora caught up her traveling bag, cast

"A long, last, lingering look"

around the dear, familiar room which she had occupied when at Rockhold from her childhood's days, and then went out and joined her brother.

In the hall below they were met by Rose.

"Be good to her, poor thing," whispered Cora to Sylvan.

"All right," replied the young lieutenant.

Rose's eyes were filled with tears. It seemed to the friendless creature very hard to lose Cora, just as Cora was beginning to be friendly.

"Good-by," said Mrs. Rothsay, taking the woman's

hand. But Rose burst into tears, threw her arms around the young lady's neck, hugged her close, and kissed her many times.

"Good-by, my pretty stepgrandmother-in-law," said Sylvan, gayly, taking her hand and giving her a kiss. "You are still

'The rose that all admire,'

but the best of friends must part."

And leaving Rose in tears, he opened the door for his sister to pass out before him. But she, at least, passed no farther than the front porch, where she stood looking down the lawn in surprise and anxiety, while Sylvan hurried off to see what was the meaning of that which had so suddenly startled them. What was it? What had happened?

A crowd of men, silent, but with faces full of suppressed excitement and surrounding something that was borne in their midst, was slowly marching up the avenue.

Cora watched Sylvan as he went to meet them; saw him speak to them, though she could not hear what he said; saw them stop and put something, which they bore along and escorted, down on the gravel; saw a parley between her brother and the crowd, and finally saw her brother turn and hurry back toward the house, wearing a pale and troubled countenance.

"You may take the carriage back to the stables,

John," said the lieutenant to the wondering negro groom, as he passed it in returning to the porch.

"What is the matter, Sylvan? What has happened? Why have you sent the carriage away?" Cora anxiously inquired.

"Because, my dear, we must not leave Rockhold at present," he gravely replied. "There has been an accident, Cora."

"An accident! On the railroad?"

"No, my dear; to our old grandfather."

"To grandfather! Oh, Sylvan! no! no!" she cried, turning white, and dropping upon a bench, all her latent affection for the aged patriarch—the unsuspected affection—waking in her heart.

"Yes, dear," said Sylvan, softly.

"Seriously? Dangerously? Fatally? Perhaps he is dead and you are trying to break it to me! You can't do it! You can't! Oh, Sylvan, is grandfather dead?" she wildly demanded.

"No, dear! No, no, no! Compose yourself. They are bringing him here, and he is perfectly conscious. He must not see you so much agitated. It would annoy him. We do not yet know how seriously he is hurt. He was thrown from his carriage when near North End. The horses took fright at the passing of a train. They ran away and went over that steep bank just at the entrance of the village. The carriage was shattered all to pieces; the coachman killed outright—poor old Joseph —and the horses so injured that they had to be shot."

"Poor old Joseph! I am so sorry! so very sorry! But grandfather! grandfather!"

"He was picked up insensible; carried to the hotel on a mattress laid on planks, borne by half a dozen workmen, and the doctor was summoned immediately. He was laid in bed, and all means were tried to restore consciousness. But as soon as he came to his senses he demanded to be brought home. The doctor thought it dangerous to do so. But you know the grandfather's obstinacy. So a stretcher was prepared, a spring mattress laid on it, and he has been borne all the way from North End to Rockhold Ferry by relays of six men at a time, relieving each other at short intervals, and escorted by the doctor and our two uncles. That, Cora, is all I can tell you."

He then entered the house, followed by Cora.

They found Rose still in the front hall, where they had left her a few minutes before. She was seated in one of the oak chairs wiping her eyes. She had not seen the approaching procession with the burden they carried. And of course she had not heard their silent movements.

She looked up in surprise at the re-entrance of Cora and Sylvan.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "Have you forgotten anything? So glad to see you back, even for half a minute. For, after all, I couldn't see you drive away. I just shut the door and flung myself into this chair to have a good cry. Can't you put off your journey now, just for to-

night and start to-morrow? You will have to do it anyhow. You can't catch the 6:30 express now," she added, coming toward them.

"We shall not attempt it, Rose," said Sylvan, in a kinder tone than he usually used in speaking to her.

"I am so glad," she said, but her further words were arrested by the grave looks of the young man.

"What is the matter with you?" she suddenly inquired.

"There has been an accident, Rose. Not fatal, my dear, so don't be frightened. My grandfather has been thrown from his carriage and stunned. But he has recovered consciousness, and they are bringing him home a deal shaken, but not in serious danger."

While Sylvan spoke, Rose gazed at him in perfect silence, with her blue eyese widening. When he finished, she asked:

"How did it happen?"

Sylvan told her.

Rose dropped into a chair and covered her face with her hands. She was more shocked than grieved by all that she had heard. If her tyrant had been brought home dead, I think she would only have sighed

"With the sigh of a great deliverance!"

"Let us go now, Rose, and prepare his bed. Sylvan will stay here to receive him," said Cora.

The two women went up to the old man's room and

turned down the bedclothes, and laid out a change of linen, and many towels in case they should be needed, and then went to the head of the stairs and waited and listened.

Presently, through the open hall door, they heard the muffled tread and subdued tones of the men, who presently entered, bearing the stretcher on which was laid the huge form of the Iron King, covered, all except his face, with a white bed-spread. Slowly, carefully, and with some difficulty they bore him up the broad staircase head first—preceded by the family physician, Dr. Cummins, and followed by Messrs. Fabian and Clarence.

Rose and Cora stood each side the open chamber door, and when the men bore the stretcher in and set it down on the floor, the two women approached and looked down on the injured man.

His countenance was scarcely affected by his accident. He was no paler than usual. He was frowning—it might be from pain or it might be from anger—and he was glaring around. Rose was afraid to speak to him, prone on the stretcher as he was, lest she should get her head bitten off. Cora bent over him and said tenderly:

"Dear grandfather, I am very sorry for this. I hope you are not hurt much."

And she had her head immediately snapped off.

"Don't be a confounded idiot!" he growled, hoarsely. "Go and send old black Martha here. She is worth a hundred of you two."

Rose hurried off to obey this order, glad enough of

an excuse to escape. And now the room was cleared of all the men except the family physician, the two sons, and the grandson.

These approached the stretcher and carefully and tenderly undressed the patient and laid him on his bed.

Then the physician made a more careful examination.

There were no bones broken. The injuries seemed to be all internal; but of their seriousness or dangerousness the physician could not yet judge. The nervous shock had certainly been severe, and that in itself was a grave misfortune to a man of Aaron Rockharrt's age, and might have been instantaneously fatal to any one of less remarkable strength.

Dr. Cummins told Mr. Fabian that he should remain in attendance on his patient all night. Then, at the desire of Mr. Rockharrt, he cleared the sick room of every one except the old negro woman.

When the door was shut upon them all, and the chamber was quiet, he administered a sedative to his patient and advised him to close his eyes and try to compose himself.

Then the doctor sat down on the right side of the bed, with old Martha on his left.

There was utter silence for a few minutes, and then old Aaron Rockharrt spoke.

"What's the hour, doctor?"

"Seven," replied the physician, after consulting his gold repeater. "But I advise you to keep quiet and try to sleep," he added, returning his timepiece to his fob.

As if the Iron King ever followed advice! As if he did not, on general principles, always run counter to it!

"Didn't I see my fool of a grandson among the other lunatics who ran after me here?" he next inquired.

"Yes."

"Where is he now?"

"With the ladies, I think."

"Send—him—up—to—me!"

The doctor shrugged his shoulders and went to obey the order. The obstinacy of this self-willed egotist was surely growing into a monomania, and perhaps it would have been more dangerous to oppose him than to comply with his whim. In a few moments Dr. Cummins reentered the room, followed by Sylvan Haught.

"I hope you are feeling easier," said the lieutenant, as he bent over his grandfather.

"I have not complained of feeling uneasy yet, have I?" growled the Iron King.

"You sent for me, sir. Can I do anything for you?"

"For me? No; not likely! But you can do your duty to your country! How is it that you are not on your way to join your regiment?"

"I had actually bidden good-by and left the house to start on my journey, when I met the men bringing you home."

"What the demon had that to do with it?"

"I could not go on, sir, and leave you under such circumstances."

"Look here, young sir!" said the Iron King, speak-

ing hoarsely, faintly, yet with strong determination. "Do you call yourself a soldier or a shirk? Let me tell you that it is the first duty of a soldier to obey orders, at all times, under all circumstances, and at all costs! If you had been a married man, and your wife had been dying—if you had been a father, and your child had been dying, it would have been your duty to leave them!"

"But, sir, there was no real need that I should go by this night's express. If I should start to-morrow morning, I shall be in good time to report for duty. It was only my zeal to be better than prompt which induced me to start earlier than necessary. To-morrow will be quite time enough to leave for New York."

"Very well; then go to-morrow by the first train," said the Iron King in a more subdued manner, for the sedative was beginning to take effect.

At a hint from the doctor the young lieutenant bade his grandfather good-night and softly stepped out of the room.

CHAPTER IX

THE SICK LION

EARLY the next morning Dr. Cummins came down stairs and joined the family at the breakfast table.

In answer to anxious inquiries, he reported that Mr. Rockharrt had slept well during the night, and had just taken refreshment prepared by old Martha under the physician's own orders, and had composed himself to sleep again.

"He would not admit any of us last night. Will he see me this morning?" inquired Rose Rockharrt.

"Of course, after a little while. It was best that I and the old nurse should have watched him alone together last night, but the woman now needs rest, and I must presently take leave, to look after my other patients. You two ladies must take the watch to-day, with one of these gentlemen within call. I will give you full directions for my patient's treatment, and will see him again in the afternoon."

"Does my father's present condition admit of my leaving him to go and look after the works this morning?" inquired Mr. Fabian, who had spent the night at Rockhold.

"Yes," replied the doctor, after some little hesitation. "Yes; I think so. If your presence here should be absolutely needed, you can be promptly summoned, you know; but one of you should remain on guard."

"Clarence will stay home, then," replied Mr. Fabian.

"Doctor, you heard my grandfather order me to leave Rockhold this morning to join my regiment. Now, what do you think? May I see him before I go?" inquired the young lieutenant.

"I will let you know when he wakes," said Dr. Cummins.

"Must you leave us to-day, Sylvan? Could you not be excused under the circumstances?" inquired Mrs. Rockharrt.

"No; I could not be excused. I must join my regiment, Rose."

"But, Cora! Oh, Cora! You will not leave us now? You are not under orders, and—and—I wish you would stay," pleaded Rose.

"I shall stay, Rose. It is as much my bounden duty to stay as it is that of Sylvan to go," answered Cora.

"Oh, that is such a relief to my feelings!" exclaimed the other lady.

Dr. Cummins looked up in surprise, glancing from one woman to the other.

Sylvan undertook to explain.

"My sister was going out with me, sir. I am her nearest relative, as she is mine, and we do not like to be separated."

"Ah!" said the doctor. "And now, very properly, she decides to stay here."

"For a while, Dr. Cummins—until the case of my grandfather shall be decided. Later I shall certainly follow my brother," Cora explained.

Before another word could be uttered the door opened and Violet Rockharrt, in a silver gray carriage dress, entered the room. Mr. Fabian sprang up to meet her.

"My dear child, why have you come out here against all orders?"

Mrs. Fabian Rockharrt saluted all the company at the breakfast, who had risen to receive her, and then replied to her husband's question.

"I have come to see how our father is. It was twelve o'clock last night when your messenger arrived at the Banks and told me that you would not be able to return that night, because an accident had happened to Mr. Rockharrt. Not a dangerous one, but yet one that would keep you with him for some hours. I know very well how accidents are smoothed over in being reported to women; so I was not reassured by that clause, and I would have set out for Rockhold immediately if it had not been a starless midnight, making the road dangerous to others as well as myself. But I was up at daybreak to start this morning, and here I am."

"Sit down, my child; sit down. You look pale and tired. Ah! did not our good doctor here forbid you taking long walks or rides?"

"I know, Fabian; but sometimes a woman must be a

law to herself. It was my duty to come in person and inquire after our father; so I came, even against orders," said Violet, composedly.

"Now look at that little creature, doctor. She seems as soft as a dove, as gentle as a lamb; but she is perfectly lawless. She defies me, abuses me, and upon occasions thrashes me. Would you believe it of her?" demanded Mr. Fabian, gazing with pride and delight on his good little wife.

"Oh, yes; I can quite believe it. She looks a perfect shrew, vixen, virago! Oh, how I pity you, Mr. Fabian!" said the doctor.

Cora filled out a cup of coffee and brought it to the visitor, whispering:

"I am glad you came, Violet. I do not believe it will hurt you one bit in any way."

"Can I see father? I want to see for myself, and to kiss him, and tell him how sorry I am; and I want to help to nurse him. Say, can I see him?"

"Not just now, dear. None of us have seen him since he was put to bed last evening except the doctor and the nurse; but in the course of the day you may. You will spend the day with us?" Cora inquired.

"I will spend the day and the night, and to-morrow and to-morrow night, and this week and next week, and just as long as I can be helpful and useful to father, if you and mamma there will permit me. And, by the way, I have not kissed mamma yet. Only shaken hands with her." And so saying, Violet put down her untasted cup

of coffee, went around the table, put her arms round Rose's neck, and kissed her fondly, saying:

"You are very sweet and lovely, mamma, and I know I shall love you. I wanted to come and see you before this, but the doctor there wouldn't allow it. But now I have come to stay as long as I may be wanted."

"I should want you forever, sweet wood violet," cooed Rose, returning her caresses.

Mr. Fabian turned away, half in wrath, half in mirth. He was much too good-humored to be seriously offended as he said to the doctor:

"Ah! these dove-eyed darlings! How mistaken we are in them! You are an old bachelor, Cummins; but if you should ever take it into your head to repent of celibacy, don't marry a dove-eyed darling, if you don't want to be defied all the days of your life."

"I won't," said the doctor; "but now I must go and see how Mr. Rockharrt is getting on, and take leave to look after my other patients."

And he left the breakfast room, followed by Mr. Fabian.

"You and Sylvan will not leave Rockhold for some time," said Violet, with a little air of triumph.

"Sylvan must leave this morning. I shall remain until grandfather gets well," said Cora, "or dies," she added, mentally.

In a few minutes Dr. Cummins returned and said that Mr. Rockharrt would see Lieutenant Haught first, and afterward the other members of his family.

Then the physician bade the family good-morning, and left the house.

Sylvan went upstairs to their grandfather's room.

There they found Mr. Fabian seated by the bedside.

Old Martha had gone to her garret to lie down and rest. The windows were all open, and the summer sun and air lighted and cooled the room.

"Come here, Sylvan," said the Iron King, and his voice, though hoarse and feeble, was peremptory.

The young lieutenant went up to the bedside and said:

"I hope you are feeling better this morning, sir."

"I hope so, too; but don't let us waste words in compliments. Cummins tells me that you wished to bid me good-by."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, bid good-by, then."

"Grandfather, have you anything to say to me before I go?" respectfully inquired the young man.

"If I had, don't you suppose that I could say it? Well, if you wish advice, I will give it you very briefly: You are an 'officer and a gentleman'—that is the phrase, I believe?"

"I hope so, sir."

"Then behave as one under all circumstances. Never lie—even to women; never cheat—even the government. That is all. I cannot bless you if that is what you want. No man can bless another—not even the Pope of Rome or the Archbishop of Canterbury. No

one under heaven can bless you. You can only bless yourself by doing your whole duty under all circumstances. You will have men in authority over you. Obey them. You will have authority over other men. Make them obey you. There, good-by!" said old Aaron Rockharrt, holding out his hand to his grandson.

Sylvan noticed how that hand shook as its aged owner held it up. He took it, lifted it to his lips, and pressed it to his heart.

"There, there; don't be foolish, Sylvan! Good-by! Good-by! And you, Fabian! What are you loitering here for, when you should be looking after the works?" impatiently demanded the Iron King.

"The carriage stands at the door, sir, waiting to take Sylvan to his train. I shall go with him as far as North End and try to do your work there in addition to my own."

"Quite right! Where is Clarence?"

"At North End, sir, where he went directly after he saw you safe in bed under the doctor's care," said Mr. Fabian, lying as fast as a horse could trot.

"Very well. Send the two women here."

"There happen to be three women below at present, sir. Violet has come to see you."

In the morning sitting room below stairs Sylvan and Fabian found the three ladies with Clarence, all in a state of anxiety to hear from the injured man.

Sylvan was more agitated in leaving his sister than any young soldier should have been. At the last, the

very last instant of parting, when Mr. Fabian had left the parlor and was on his way to the carriage, Sylvan turned back and for the third time clasped Cora in his arms.

"Never mind, Sylvan; as soon as I possibly can, without violating my duty to the only one on earth to whom I owe any duty, I shall go out to you. I can see now, now in this hour of parting, how very right I was in deciding to go with you. My journey is not abandoned, it is only postponed. God bless you, my dear."

After standing at the front door until they had watched the carriage out of sight, the three went upstairs and softly entered the room of the injured man, so softly that he did not hear their entrance. They stood in a silent group, believing him to be asleep, and afraid to sit down, lest a chair should creak and wake him up.

In a few seconds, however, they heard him clear his throat, knew that he was awake, and went up to his bedside.

Rose spoke, gently, for all.

"You sent for us, Mr. Rockharrt. We are all here, and we hope that you are much better," she said.

"Oh, you do! Stand there—all three of you—at the foot of the bed, so that I can see you without turning."

The three women obeyed, placing themselves in line as he had directed, and perceived that he lay upon the flat of his back, looking straight before him, because he could not turn on either side without great pain.

He scanned them and then said:

"Ah, Violet, you are there! You have a proper sense of duty, my girl. So you have come to see how it is with me yourself, eh?"

"Yes, father; and also to stay and help nurse you, if I may be permitted to do so."

"Rubbish! My wife can nurse me. It is her place. I don't want a lot of other women around me! I won't have more than one in the room with me at a time! Violet, get into your carriage and return to your home."

"Oh, papa, how have I offended you?"

"Not in any way as yet; but you will offend me if you disobey me. You must go home at once. You are not in a condition to be of any service here. You would only injure your own health, and distract the attention of these women from me. Wherever there is a lot of women, there is sure to be more talk than duty. So you must go. When I get well, and you get strong again, you may come and stay as long as you like. So, now, bid me good-by and be off with yourself."

Violet, feeling much chagrined, went around to the side of the bed, took the hand of her father-in-law, bent over and kissed him good-by.

"Now, Cora, take her out and see her off."

Violet took leave of her young mother-in-law, and followed Cora from the sick room.

"Now, Rose, close all the shutters; darken the room and sit beside the head of my bed. Don't speak until you are spoken to; don't move; don't even read; but sit still, silent, attentive, while I try to rest."

Rose obeyed all his orders, and then sat like a dead woman, back in the resting chair beside him. She had noted how weak and husky his voice had been in giving his instructions to his "womankind," with what pain and effort he had spoken, while his strong will bore him through the interview, which, short as it was, had left him prostrate and exhausted.

Rose wished to offer him the cordial the doctor had left, but he had ordered her not to move or speak until she was spoken to, and Rose dared not disobey. She did not know what might be the result of her passive obedience to him, nor, to tell the truth, did she very much care. Rose was weary of life!

Meanwhile Cora and Violet went downstairs together.

At six o'clock the doctor came, and made anxious inquiries into the state of the injured man; but Cora could only report that he seemed to have passed a quiet day, watched by his wife, but unapproached by any other member of his family, all of whom he had forbidden to come near him unless called.

"A very wise provision, my dear Mrs. Rothsay. I will go up now and see him," said Dr. Cummins.

A few minutes later Rose came down and entered the parlor, looking very faint and white except for two small, deep crimson spots on the cheeks.

"Here, Rose, take this chair," said Violet, vacating the most comfortable seat in the room, on which she had sat all the afternoon.

The woman dropped into it, too weak and weary to stand upon ceremony.

"How did you leave grandfather?"

"I hardly know; but doing well, I should think, for he has been dozing all day, only waking up to ask for iced beef tea, or milk punch, and then, when he had drunk one or the other, going to sleep again. I have been fanning him all the time except when I have been feeding him."

While Rose was sipping some tea which had been promptly brought to her, the doctor came in and reported Mr. Rockharrt as doing extremely well.

"You will stay to dinner with us, Dr. Cummins?" said Rose.

"Thank you, my dear lady, but I cannot. I shall just wait to see Mr. Fabian Rockharrt and give my report to him in all its details, as I promised, and then hurry home and go to bed. I have had no sleep for the last twenty-four—no, bless my soul! not for the last thirty-six hours!" replied the physician. He had scarcely ceased to speak when Mr. Fabian entered the room.

"Oh! home so soon!" exclaimed Violet, starting up to meet him.

"Yes; how is the father?"

"There is the doctor; ask him."

"Ah, Dr. Cummins! Good-afternoon? How is your patient?"

"Come with me into the library, Mr. Fabian, and I will give you a full report."

"Where is Clarence?" inquired Fabian.

"Upstairs somewhere. He did not come to luncheon," replied Cora.

"Poor Clarence! He is awfully cut up!" said Mr. Fabian, as he left the parlor with Dr. Cummins. As they passed through the hall they were joined by Mr. Clarence, who had just heard of the doctor's arrival.

"I left him very comfortable, carefully watched by old Martha, who has waked up refreshed after a ten-hours' sleep and has taken her place by his bedside. There is no immediate cause for anxiety, my dear Clarence," said the physician, in reply to the questions put to him.

"The worst of it is, doctor, that while it was absolutely necessary for me to stay here during Fabian's absence, I dare not go into my father's room. He thinks that I am at North End. And he would become very angry if he knew that I was here against his will and his commands. Besides which, I hate deception and concealment," complained Mr. Clarence.

"It is rather a difficult case to manage, my boy, but it is absolutely necessary that either yourself or your brother should be on hand here day and night; it is equally necessary that your father should be kept quiet. So I see nothing better to do than for you to stay here and keep still until you are wanted," replied the doctor.

And then the three went into the little library or office at the rear of the hall, and what further was said among them was whispered with closed doors. At the end of

fifteen minutes they came out. The doctor took leave of all the family and went away.

Mr. Fabian went up to his father's door and rapped softly.

Old Martha came to admit him.

"How is your master? Is he awake? Can I see him?" he inquired.

"Surely, Marse Fabe! Ole marse wide awake, berry easy, and 'quiring arter you. Come in, sar!"

Mr. Fabian entered the room, which was in some darkness from the closed window shutters, and went up to his father's bed.

"I hope you are better, sir," he said.

"I don't know," said the injured man, in a faint voice.

"How are the works getting on?"

"Famously, sir! Splendidly! Pray do not feel the least anxiety on that score."

"Where is Clarence?"

"At North End, sir. Of course, he would not think of leaving the works while both you and myself are absent."

"I don't know," sighed the weary invalid, for the third time. "But you had better not, either of you, attempt to deceive me while I am lying here on my back."

"Not for the world, my dear father! Pray do not be doubtful or anxious. We are your dutiful sons, sir, and our first——"

"Rubbish!" exclaimed the broken Iron King. "That will do! Go send Rose to me. Why the deuce did she

leave? I—I—I——" His voice dropped into an inarticulate murmur.

Mr. Fabian bent over him, and saw that he had dozed off to sleep.

"Dat's de way he's been a-goin' on eber since de doctor lef'. It's de truck wot de doctor give him," said old Martha.

Fabian stole on tiptoe out of the room. Dinner was waiting for him downstairs. He would not deliver his father's selfish message to Rose, because he wished the poor creature to dine in peace. He told Clarence to give her his arm to the dining room.

While they were all at dinner Violet explained to her husband why Mr. Rockharrt had directed her to return home. Poor Violet was very loth to stir up any ill feeling between the father and son; but she need not have feared. Mr. Fabian understood the autocrat too well to take offense at the dismissal of his wife.

The next morning when the family physician arrived, and visited the injured man, he found him suffering from restlessness and a rising fever.

He reported this condition to Mr. Clarence Rockharrt, left very particular directions for the treatment of the patient, and then took leave, with the promise to return in the evening and remain all night.

Later in the afternoon the doctor, having finished all other professional calls for the day, arrived at Rockhold. He found his patient delirious. He took up his post by the sick bed for the night, and then peremptorily sent

off the worn-out watcher, Rose, to the rest she so much needed.

The condition of Aaron Rockharrt was very critical. Irritative fever had set in with great violence, and this was the beginning of the hard struggle for life that lasted many days, during which delirium, stupor, and brief lucid intervals followed each other with the rise and fall of the fever. A professional nurse was engaged to attend him; but the real burden of the nursing fell on Rose.

CHAPTER X

A VOLUNTARY EXPIATION

Rose never lost patience. She stayed by the bedside always until the doctor turned her out of the room. She came back the moment she was called, night or day.

Weeks passed and Mr. Rockharrt grew better and stronger, but Rose grew worse and weaker. The fine autumn weather that braced up the convalescent old man chilled and depressed the consumptive young woman.

It was certain that Mr. Rockharrt would entirely regain his health and strength, and even take out a new lease of life.

"I never saw any one like your grandfather in all my long practice," said the doctor to Cora one morning, after he had left his patient; "he is a wonder to me. Nothing but a catastrophe could ever have laid him on an invalid bed; and no other man that I know could have recovered from such injuries as he has sustained. Why, in a month from this time he will be as well as ever. He has a constitution of tremendous strength."

"But the poor wife," said Cora.

"Ah, poor soul!" sighed the doctor.

"And yet a little while ago she seemed such a perfect picture of health."

"My dear, wherever you see that abnormally clear, fresh, semi-transparent complexion, be sure it is a bad sign—a sign of unsoundness within."

"Can nothing be done for Rose?"

"Yes; and I am doing it as much as she will let me. I advise a warmer climate for the coming winter. Mr. Rockharrt will be able to travel by the first of November, and he should then take her to Florida. But, you see, he pooh-poohs the whole suggestion. Well, 'A willful man must have his way,'" said the doctor, as he took up his hat and bade the lady good-by.

A week after this conversation, on the day on which Aaron Rockharrt first sat up in his easy chair, Rose had her first hemorrhage from the lungs. It laid her on the bed from which she was never to rise.

Cora became her constant and tender nurse. Rose was subdued and patient. A few days after this she said to the lady:

"It seems to me that my own dear father, who has been absent from my thoughts for so many years, has drawn very near his poor child in these last few months, and nearer still in the last few days. I do not see him, nor hear him, nor feel him by any natural sense, but I do perceive him. I do perceive that he is trying to do me good, and that he is glad I am coming to him so soon. I am sorry for all the wrong I have done, and I hope the Lord will forgive me. But how can I expect

Him to do it, when I can scarcely forgive—even now on my dying bed I can scarcely forgive—my stepmother and her husband for the neglect and cruelty that wrecked my life? Oh, but I forget. You know nothing of all this."

Cora did know. Fabian had told her; but he had also exacted a promise of secrecy from her; so she said nothing in reply to this.

Rose continued, speaking in a low, meditative tone:

"Yes, I am sorry, sorry for the evil I have done. It was not worth while to do it. Life is too short—too short even at its longest. But, oh! I had such a passionate ambition for recognition by the great world! for the admiration of society! Every one whom I met in our quiet lives told me, either by words or looks, that I was beautiful—very beautiful—and I believed them; and I longed for wealth and rank, for dress and jewels, to set off this beauty, and for ease and luxury to enjoy life. Oh, what vanity! Oh, what selfishness! And here I am, with the grave yawning to swallow me up," she murmured, drearily.

"No, dear; no," said Cora, gently laying her hand on the blue-white forehead of the fading woman. "No, Rose. No grave opens for any human being; but only for the body that the freed human being has left behind. It is not the grave that opens for you, Rose, but your father's arms. Would you like to see a minister, dear?"

"If Mr. Rockharrt does not object."

"Then you shall see one."

Rose's sick room was on the opposite side of the hall from Mr. Rockharrt's convalescent apartment.

If the Iron King felt any sorrow at his young wife's mortal illness, he did not show it. If he felt any compunction for having taxed her strength to its extremity, he did not express it. He maintained his usual stolid manner, and merely issued general orders that no trouble or expense must be spared in her treatment and in her interest. He came into her room every day, leaning on the arm of his servant, to ask her how she felt, and to sit a few minutes by her bed.

Violet could no longer come to Rockhold, because a little Violet bud, only a few days old, kept her a close prisoner at the Banks. But Mr. Fabian came twice a week. The minister from the mission church at North End came very frequently, and as he was an earnest, fervent Christian, his ministrations were most beneficial to Rose.

On the day that Mr. Rockharrt first rode out, the end came, rather suddenly at the last.

There was no one in the house but Cora and the servants, Mr. Clarence having gone back to North End. Cora had left Rose in the care of old Martha, and had come downstairs to write a letter to her brother. She had scarcely written a page when the door was opened by Martha, who said, in a frightened tone:

"Come, Miss Cora—come quick! there's a bad change.

I'm 'feared to leave her a minute, even to call you. Please come quick!"

Both went to the bedside of the dying woman, over whose face the dark shadows of death were creeping. Rose could no longer raise her hand to beckon or raise her voice to call, but she fixed her eyes imploringly on Cora, who bent low to catch any words she might wish to say. She was gasping for breath as in broken tones she whispered:

"Cora—the Lord—has given me—grace—to forgive them. Write to—my stepmother. Fabian—will tell you —where——"

"Yes; I will, I will, dear Rose," said Cora, gazing down through blinding tears, as she stooped and pressed her warm lips on the death-cold lips beneath them.

Rose lifted her failing eyes to Cora's sympathetic face and never moved them more; there they became fixed.

The sound of approaching wheels was heard.

"It is my grandfather. Go and tell him," whispered Cora to old Martha, without turning her head.

The woman left the room, and in a few moments Mr. Rockharrt entered it, leaning on the arm of his valet.

When he approached the bed, he saw how it was and asked no questions. He went to the side opposite to that occupied by Cora, and bent over the dying woman.

"Rose," he said in a low voice, "Rose, my child."

She was past answering, past hearing. He took her thin, chill hand in his, but it was without life.

He bent still lower over her, and whispered:

"Rose."

But she never moved or murmured.

Her eyes were fixed in death on those of Cora.

Then suddenly a smile came to the dying face, light dawned in the dying eyes, as she lifted them and gazed away beyond Cora's form, and murmuring contentedly, "Father, father——" and

"With a sigh of a great deliverance,"

she fell asleep.

They stood in silence over the dead for a few moments, and then Mr. Rockharrt drew the white coverlet up over the ashen face, and then leaning on the arm of his servant went out of the room.

Three days later the mortal remains of Rose Rockharrt were laid in the cemetery at North End.

It was on the first of November, a week after the funeral, that Mr. Rockharrt, for the first time in three months, went to the works.

On that day, while Cora sat alone in the parlor, a card was brought to her—

"The Duke of Cumbervale."

The Duke of Cumbervale entered the parlor.

Cora rose to receive him; the blood rushing to her head and suffusing her face with blushes, merely from the vivid memory of the painful past called up by the sudden sight of the man who had been the unconscious

cause of all her unhappiness. Most likely the old lover mistook the meaning of the lady's agitation in his presence, and ascribed it to a self-flattering origin.

However that might have been, he advanced with easy grace, and bowing slightly, said:

"My dear Mrs. Rothsay, I am very happy to see you again! I hope I find you quite well?"

"Quite well, thank you," she replied, recovering her self-control.

In the ensuing conversation, Cora made known her grandfather's accident and the death of Rose.

"I am truly grieved to have intruded at so inopportune a time," asserted the visitor, and arose to take leave.

Then Cora's conscience smote her for her inhospitable rudeness. Here was a man who had crossed the sea at her grandfather's invitation, who had reached the country in ignorance of the family trouble; who had come directly from the seaport to North End, and ridden from North End to Rockhold—a distance of six or seven miles; and she had scarcely given him a civil reception. And now should she let him go all the way back to North End without even offering him some refreshment?

Such a course, under such circumstances, even toward an utter stranger, would have been unprecedented in her neighborhood, which had always been noted for its hospitality.

Yet still she was afraid to offer him any polite atten-

tion, lest she should in so doing give him encouragement to urge his suit, that she dreaded to hear, and was determined to reject.

It was not until the visitor had taken his hat in his left hand, and held out the right to bid her good-morning, that she forced herself to do her hostess' duty, and say:

"This is a very dull house, duke, but if you can endure its dullness, I beg you will stay to lunch with me."

A smile suddenly lighted up the visitor's cold blue eyes.

"'Dull,' madam? No house can be dull—even though darkened by a recent bereavement—which is blessed by your presence. I thank you. I shall stay with much pleasure."

And now I have done it! thought Cora, with vexation.

At length the clock struck two, the luncheon bell rang, and Cora arose with a smile of invitation. The duke gave her his arm, they went into the dining room. The gray-haired butler was in waiting. They took their places at the table. Old John had just set a plate of lobster salad before the guest when the sound of carriage wheels was heard approaching the house. In a few minutes more there came heavy steps along the hall, the door opened, and old Aaron Rockharrt entered the room. Cora and her visitor both arose.

"Ah, duke! how do you do? I got your telegram on reaching North End; went to the hotel to meet you, and found that you had started for Rockhold. Had

your dispatch arrived an hour earlier I should have gone in my carriage to meet you," said the Iron King with pompous politeness.

Now it seemed in order for the visitor to offer some condolence to this bereaved husband. But how could he, where the widower himself so decidedly ignored the subject of his own sorrow? To have said one word about his recent loss would have been, in the world's opinion and vocabulary, "bad form."

"You are very kind, Mr. Rockharrt; and I thank you. I came on quite comfortably in the hotel hack, which waits to take me back," was all that he said.

"No, sir! that hack does not wait to take you back. I have sent it away. Moreover, I settled your bill at the hotel, gave up your rooms, saw your valet, and ordered your luggage to be brought here. It will arrive in an hour," said the Iron King, as he threw himself into the great leathern chair that the old butler pushed to the table for his master's accommodation.

The duke looked at the old man in a state of stupefaction. How on earth should he deal with this purse-proud egotist, who took the liberty of paying his hotel bill, giving up his apartments and ordering his servants? and doing all this without the faintest idea that he was committing an unpardonable impertinence.

"You are to know, duke, that from the time you entered upon my domain at North End, you became my guest—mine, sir! John, that Johannisberg. Fill the duke's glass. My own importation, sir; twelve years

in my cellar. You will scarcely find its equal anywhere. Your health, sir."

The duke bowed and sipped his wine.

His future bearing to this old barbarian required mature reflection. Only for the duke's infatuation with Cora, it would have not needed a minute's thought to make up his mind to flee from Rockhold forthwith.

When luncheon was over Mr. Rockharrt invited the duke into his study to smoke. Before they had finished their first cigar the Iron King, withdrawing his "lotus" and sending a curling cloud of vapor into the air, said:

"You have something on your mind that you wish to get off it, sir. Out with it! Nothing like frankness and promptness."

"You are right, Mr. Rockharrt. I do wish to speak to you on a point on which my life's happiness hangs. Your beautiful granddaughter——"

"Yes, yes! Of course I knew it concerned her."

"Then I hope you do not disapprove my suit."

"I don't now, or I never should have invited you to come over to this country and speak for yourself. The circumstances are different. When I refused my granddaughter's hand to you in London, it was because I had already promised it to another man—a fine fellow, worthy to become one of my family, if ever a man was —and I never break a promise. So I refused your offer, and brought the young woman home, and married her to Rothsay, who disappeared in a strange and mysterious manner, as you may have heard, and was never

heard of again until the massacre of Terrepeur by the Comanche Indians—among whom, it seems, he was a missionary—when the news came that he had been murdered by the savages and his body burned in the fire of his own hut. But the horror is two years old now, and I am at liberty to bestow the hand of my widowed granddaughter on whomsoever I please. You'll do as well as another man, and Heaven knows that I shall be glad to have any honest white man take her off my hands, for she is giving me a deal of trouble."

"Trouble, sir? I thought your lovely granddaughter was the comfort and staff of your age, and, therefore, almost feared to ask her hand in marriage. But what is the nature of the trouble, if I may ask?"

"Didn't I tell you? Well, she has got a missionary maggot in her head. It's feeding on all the little brains she ever had. She wants to go out as a teacher and preacher to the red heathen, and spend her life and her fortune among them. She wants to do as Rule did, and, I suppose, die as Rule died. Oh, of course—

'Twas so for me young Edwin did,
And so for him will I!'

And all that rot. I cannot break her will without breaking her neck. If you can do anything with her, take her, in the Lord's name. And joy go with her."

The young suitor felt very uncomfortable. He was not at all used to such an old ruffian as this. He did

not know how to talk with him—what to reply to his rude consent to the proposal of marriage. At length his compassion, no less than his love for Cora, inspired him to say:

"Thank you, Mr. Rockharrt. I will take the lady, if she will do me the honor to trust her happiness to my keeping."

"More fool you! But that is your look-out," grunted the old man.

The next morning when they met at breakfast Mr. Rockharrt invited his guest to accompany him to North End to inspect the iron mines and foundries, the locomotive works and all the rest of it.

The duke had no choice but to accept the invitation.

The two gentlemen left directly after breakfast, and Cora rejoiced in the respite of one whole day from the society of the unwelcome guest.

She saw the house set in order, gave directions for the dinner, and then retired to her own private sitting room to resume her labor of love, the life of her lost husband.

Earlier than usual that afternoon the Iron King returned home accompanied by their guest and by Mr. Clarence, who had come with them in honor of the duke. The evening was spent in a rubber of whist, in which Mr. Rockharrt and the duke, who were partners, were the winners over Cora and Mr. Clarence, their antagonists. The evening was finished at the usual hour with champagne and sago biscuits.

The next morning, when Mr. Rockharrt and Mr. Clar-

ence were about to leave the house for the carriage to take them to North End, the Iron King turned abruptly and said to his granddaughter:

"By the way, Cora, Fabian and Violet are coming to dinner this evening to meet the duke. It will be a mere family affair upon a family occasion, eh, duke! A very quiet little dinner among ourselves. No other guests! Good-morning."

And so saying the old man left the house, accompanied by his son.

Cora returned to the drawing room, where she had left the duke. He arose immediately and placed a chair for her; but she waved her hand in refusal of it, and standing, said very politely:

"You will find the magazines of the month and the newspapers of the day on the table of the library on the opposite side of the hall, if you feel disposed to look over them."

"The papers of to-day! How is it possible you are so fortunate as to get the papers of to-day at so early an hour, at so remote a point?" inquired the duke, probably only to hold her in conversation.

"Mr. Clarence Rockharrt's servant takes them from the earliest mail and starts with them for Rockhold. Mr. Rockharrt usually reads the morning papers here before his breakfast."

"A wonderful conquest over time and space are our modern locomotives," observed the duke.

Cora assented and then said:

"Pray use the full freedom of the house and grounds; of the servants also, and the horses and carriages. Mr. Rockharrt places them all at your disposal. But please excuse me, for I have an engagement which will occupy me nearly all day."

The duke looked disappointed, but bowed gravely and answered:

"Of course; pray do not let me be a hindrance to your more important occupations, Mrs. Rothsay."

"Thank you!" she answered, a little vaguely, and with a smile she left the room,

"Rejoicing to be free!"

The duke anathematized his fate in finding so much difficulty in the way of his wooing, his lady love evading him with a grace, a coolness, and a courtesy which he was constrained to respect.

He strolled into the library, and then loitered along on the path leading down to the ferry.

Here he found the boat at the little wharf and old Lebanon on duty.

"Sarvint, marster," said the old negro, touching his rimless old felt hat. "Going over?"

"Yes, my man," said the duke, stepping on board the boat.

"W'ich dey calls me Uncle Lebnum as mentions ob me in dese parts, marster," the old ferryman explained, touching his hat.

"Oh, they do? Very well. I will remember," said the passenger, as the boat was pushed off from the shore.

"How manw trips do you make in a day?" inquired the fare.

"'Pen's 'pon how many people is a-comin' an' goin'. Some days I don't make no trip at all. Oder days, w'en dere's a weddin' or a fun'al, I makes many as fifty."

The passage was soon made, and the duke stepped out on the west bank.

"Is there any path leading to the top of this ridge, Uncle—Lemuel?" inquired the duke.

"Lebnum, young marster, if you please! Lebnum! —w'ich dere is no paff an' no way o' gettin' to de top o' dis wes' range, jes' 'cause 'tis too orful steep; but ef you go 'bout fo' mile up de road, you'd come to a paff leadin' zigzag, wall o' Troy like, up to Siffier's Roos'."

"Zephyr's—what?"

"Roos', marster. Yes, sar. W'ich so 'tis call 'cause she usen to roos' up dar, jes' like ole turkey buzzard. W'en you get up dar, you can see ober free States. Yes, sar, 'cause dat p'ints w'ere de p'ints o' boundy lines ob free States meets—yes, sah!"

"I think I will take a walk to that point. I suppose I can find the path?"

"You can't miss it, sah, if you keeps a sharp lookout. About fo' miles up, sah."

"Very well. Shall you be here when I come back?"

"No, sah. Dis ain't my stoppin' place; t'other side is. But I'll be on de watch dere, and ef you holler for

me, I'll come. I'll come anyways, 'cause I'll be sure to see you."

"Quite so," said the duke, as he sauntered up that very road between the foot of the mountain and the bank of the river down which the festive crowd had come on Corona Haught's fatal wedding day.

An hour's leisurely walk brought him to the first cleft in the rock.

From the back of this the path ascended, with many a double, to the wooded shelf on which old Scythia's hut had once stood—hidden. When he reached the spot he found nothing but charred logs, blasted trees, and ashes, as if the spot had been wasted by fire.

A ray of dazzling light darted from the ashes at his feet. In some surprise he stooped to ascertain the cause, and picked up a ring; examined it curiously; found it to be set with a diamond of rare beauty and great value. Then in sudden amazement he turned to the reverse side of the golden cup that clasped the gem and saw a monogram.

"I thought so," he muttered to himself; "I thought that there was not another such a peculiar setting to any gem in the world but that; and now the monogram proves it beyond the shadow of a doubt to be the same. But how in the name of wonder should the lost talisman be found here—in the ashes of some charcoal burner's hut?"

With these words he took out and opened his pocket-book and carefully placed the ring in its safest fold,

closed and returned the book to his pocket, and arose and left the spot. The duke turned to descend the mountain.

At length, however, he reached the foot, and then, under the shadow of the ridge that threw the whole narrow valley into premature twilight, he hurried to the ferry.

The boat was not there. Indeed, he had not expected to find it after what old Lebanon had told him. It was too obscure in the valley to permit him to see across the river, so he shouted:

"Boat!"

"All wight, young marster, but needn't split your t'roat nor my brain pan, nider! I can hear you! I's coming!" came the voice from mid-stream, for the old ferryman was already half across the river with a chance passenger.

In a few minutes more the boat grated upon the shore and the passenger jumped out, tipped his hat to the duke, and hurried up the river road toward North End.

"Dat pusson were Mr. Thomas Rylan', fust foreman ober all de founderies. Dere's a many foremen, but he be de fust. Come down long ob de ole mars dis arternoon arter some 'counts, I reckon, an' now gone back wid a big bundle ob papers an' doc'ments. Yes, sah. Get in. I's ready to start," said the ferryman, as he cleared a seat in the stern of the boat for the accommodation of the passenger.

"Who used to live in that hut on the mountain before

it was burned down?" inquired the duke as he took his seat.

"Ole Injun 'oman named Siffier."

"Where did she come from?"

"Dunno dat nudder. Nobody dunno."

"Can't you tell me something about such a strange person who lived right here in your neighborhood?"

"Look yere, marster, leas' said soones' mended where she's 'cerned. I can't tell you on'y but jes' dis: She 'peared yere 'bout twenty year ago, or mo'. She built dat dere hut wid her own han's, an' she use to make baskets an' brackets an' sich, an' fetch 'em roun' to de people to sell. She made 'em out'n twigs an' ornimented 'em wid red rose berries an' hollies an' sich, an' mighty purty dey was, an' de young gals liked 'em, dey did. An' she made her libbin outen de money she got for her wares. She use to tell fortins too; an' folks did say as she tole true, an' some did say as she had a tell-us-man ring w'ich, when she wore it, she could see inter de futur; but Lor', young marse, dey was on'y supercilly young idiwuts as b'liebed dat trash! But she nebber would take no money for tellin' fortins—nebber! —w'ich was curous. De berry day as de gubner-leck was missin' ob, she wanished too. When de cons'able went to 'rest her, he foun' her gone an' de hut burnt up. Now, yere we is, young marse, at de lan'in', an' you can get right out yere 'dout wettin' your feet," said the old ferryman, as he pushed the boat up to the dry end of the wharf.

The passenger astonished the old ferryman by putting a quarter of an eagle in his hand, and then sprang from the boat and ran up the avenue leading toward the house. There was no light visible from the windows of the mansion. The dinner party was a strictly private family affair, and nothing but the solitary lamp at the head of the avenue appeared to guide the pedestrian's steps through the darkness of the newly fallen night.

He reached the house, and was admitted by the old servant.

When his toilet was complete, the duke went down to the drawing room to join the family circle.

The dinner, quiet as it was, was a success. To be sure, the diners were all in deep mourning and the conversation was rather subdued; but, then, it was perhaps on that account the more interesting.

The many courses, altogether, occupied more than an hour.

When the cloth was drawn and the dessert placed upon the table, at a signal from the Iron King the butler went around the table and filled every glass with champagne, then returned and stood at his master's back. Mr. Rockharrt arose and made a speech, and proposed a toast that greatly astonished his company and compromised two of them. With his glass in his hand, he said:

"My sons, daughters, and friend: You all doubtless understand the object of this family gathering, and also why this celebration of an interesting family event must

necessarily be confined to the members of the family. In a word, it is my duty and pleasure to announce to you all the betrothal in marriage of his grace the Duke of Cumbervale and my granddaughter, Mrs. Corona Rothsay. I propose the health of the betrothed pair."

Cora put down her glass and turned livid with dismay and indignation. All the other diners, the duke among them, arose to the occasion and honored the toast, and then sat down, all except the duke, who remained standing, and though somewhat embarrassed by this unexpected proceeding on the part of the Iron King, yet vaguely supposed it might be a local custom, and at all events was certainly very much pleased with it. Being in love and being taken by surprise, he could not be expected to speak sensibly, or even coherently. He said:

"Ladies and gentlemen: This is the happiest day of my life as yet. I look forward to a happier one in the near future, when I shall call the lovely lady at my side by the dearest name that man can utter, and I shall call you not only my dear friends, but my near relatives. I propose the health of the greatest benefactor of the human race now living. The man who, by his mighty life's work, has opened up the resources of nature, compelled the everlasting mountains to give up their priceless treasures of coal and iron ore; given employment to thousands of men and women; made this savage wilderness of rock, and wood, and water 'bloom and blossom as the rose,' and hum with the stir of industry

like a myriad hives of bees. I propose the health of Mr. Aaron Rockharrt."

All, except Cora, arose and honored this toast.

Mr. Fabian Rockharrt replied on the part of his father.

Then the health of each member of the party was proposed in turn. When this was over the two ladies withdrew from the table and went into the drawing room, leaving the gentlemen to their wine.

"Oh, my dear, dear Cora! I am so glad! I wish you joy with my whole, whole heart!" exclaimed Violet, effusively, but most sincerely and earnestly, as she clasped Corona to her heart. The next instant she let her go and gazed at Cora in surprise and dismay.

"Why, what is the matter, Cora? You are as white and as cold as death. What is the matter?" demanded Violet as she led and half supported Corona to an easy chair, in which the latter dropped.

"Tell me, Cora. What is it, dear? What can I do for you? Can I get you anything? Is all this emotion caused by the announcement of your betrothal to the duke?" demanded Violet, hurrying question upon question, and trembling even more than Cora.

"Sit down, Violet. Never mind me. I shall be all right presently. Don't be frightened, darling," said Cora as well as she could speak.

"But let me do something for you!"

"You can do nothing."

"But what caused this?"

"My feelings have been outraged!—outraged! That is all!"

"How? How? Surely not by Mr. Rockharrt's announcement of your betrothal to the duke? It was rather embarrassing to the betrothed pair, I admit; but surely it was the proper thing to do."

"'The proper thing to do!' Violet, it was false! false! I am not betrothed to the duke. I never was. I never shall be. I would not marry an emperor to share a throne. My life is consecrated to good works in the very field in which my dear husband died. I have said this to my grandfather and to you all, over and over again. If it had not been for Mr. Rockharrt's accident that endangered his life, I should have gone out to the Indian Territory with my brother, and should have been at work there at this present time. I shall go at the first opportunity."

Cora spoke very excitedly, being almost beside herself with wrath and shame at the affront which had been put upon her.

"I thought the duke was an old admirer of yours, and had come over on purpose to marry you," said Violet.

"That is too true. He came against my will. I have never given him the slightest encouragement. How could I when my life is consecrated to the memory of my husband and to the work he left unfinished? I fear Mr. Rockharrt assured the duke of my hand; and when he heard the false announcement of our betrothal, he

took it for granted that it was all right. He must have done so; though he himself was much taken by surprise."

"How very strange of Mr. Rockharrt to do such a thing. If I had been you, Cora, I should have got up and disclaimed it."

"No, you would not. You would not have made a scene at the dinner table. I was in no way responsible for the announcement made by my grandfather, and in no way bound by it. The silence that seemed to indorse it was rendered absolutely necessary under the circumstances."

"But what shall you do about it?"

"As soon as I can speak of it without making a scene, I shall tell Mr. Rockharrt and the Duke of Cumbervale that a most reprehensible liberty has been taken with my name. I will say that I never have been, and never will be, engaged to the Duke of Cumbervale, or to any other man. That is what I shall do about it."

"It would mortify the duke very much."

"I do not care if it does."

"And, indeed, it would put Mr. Rockharrt into a terrible rage."

"I cannot help it. Here come the gentlemen."

At that moment the four gentlemen entered the drawing room. The duke came directly up to Cora, and bending over her, said in a low voice inaudible to the rest of the party:

"Corona, you have blessed me beyond the power of

words to express! Only the dedication of a life to your happiness——"

There the ardent lover was suddenly stopped by the cold look of surprise in Cora's eyes. His face took on a disturbed expression.

"I think there is some serious mistake here, sir, which we may set right at some more fitting opportunity. Will you have the kindness not to refer to the comedy enacted at our dinner table to-night?"

"I will obey you, although I do not understand you," said the duke.

"Oblige me, duke! I want to show you a map of the projected Oregon and Alaska railroad," said the Iron King, coming toward his guest with a roll of parchment in his hands.

The duke immediately arose and went off with his host to a distant table, where the map was spread out, and the two gentlemen sat down to examine it. Mr. Fabian and Mr. Clarence came over to join Cora and Violet.

"This is a pretty march you have stolen on us, Cora! I had no more idea of this than the man in the moon! But I congratulate you, my dear! I congratulate you! Your present from me shall be a set of the most splendid diamonds that can be got together by the diamond merchants of Europe. No mere set that can be picked up ready set, eh? Diamonds that shall grace a duchess, my dear!" said Mr. Fabian, ostentatiously.

"Cora, my dear, I was as much surprised as Fabian.

But, oh! I was happy for your sake. The duke is a good fellow, I am sure, and awfully in love with you. Ah! didn't he offer a just and heartfelt tribute to the father! I declare, Cora, I never fully appreciated my father, or realized what a great benefactor he was to the human race, until the duke made that little speech in proposing his health. How appreciative the duke is! Really, Cora, dear, you are a very happy woman, and I congratulate you with all my heart and soul; indeed, I do," said Mr. Clarence, wringing the young lady's hand, and turning away to hide the tears that filled his eyes.

"Thank you, Uncle Clarence. Thank you, Uncle Fabian. I am grateful for your congratulations, on account of your good intentions; but—congratulations are quite uncalled for on this occasion."

"Why—what on earth do you mean, Cora?" inquired Mr. Fabian, while Mr. Clarence looked full of uneasiness.

"I mean that I have never been engaged to the Duke of Cumbervale, and never mean to marry him. Mr. Rockharrt's announcement was unauthorized and unfounded. It was just an act of his despotic will, to oblige me to contract a marriage which he favors."

The two men looked on the speaker in mute amazement.

"We will not talk more of this to-night. But the matter must be set right to-morrow," said Cora.

A little later Mr. and Mrs. Fabian Rockharrt took leave and departed for their home.

CHAPTER XI

UNREQUITED LOVE

The Duke of Cumbervale, weary of a sleepless pillow, arose early and rang his bell, startling his gentlemanly valet from his morning slumbers; dressed himself with monsieur's assistance, and went downstairs with the intention of taking a walk before the family should be up.

But his intention was forestalled by the appearance of Mr. Rockharrt coming out of his chamber on the opposite side of the hall.

The Iron King looked up in some surprise at the apparition of his guest at so early an hour; but quickly composed himself as he gave him the matutinal salutation:

"Ah, good-morning, duke. An early riser, like myself, eh? Come down into the library with me, and let us look over the morning papers."

A cheerful coal fire was burning in the grate, a very acceptable comfort on this chill November morning.

This was one of the happy days when there is "nothing in the papers"—that is to say, nothing interesting, absorbing, soul-harrowing, in the form of financial ruin, highway robbery, murder, arson, fire, or flood. Every-

thing in the world at the present brief hour seemed going on well, consequently the papers were very dull, flat, stale and unprofitable, and were soon laid aside by the host and his guest, and they fell into conversation.

"You took a long walk yesterday, I hear—went across in the ferry boat, and strolled up to the foot of Scythia's Roost."

"I did. Can you tell me anything about that curious spot?"

"No; nothing but that it was the dwelling of an Indian woman, who pretended to second sight, and who should have been sent to the State's prison as a felon, or, at the very least, to the madhouse as a lunatic. She was burned out, or perhaps burned herself out, and vanished on the same night that Governor Rothsay disappeared. She was in some way cognizant of a plot against him that would prevent him from ever entering upon the duties of his office. I, in my capacity as magistrate, issued a warrant for her arrest, but it was too late. She was gone. It is said by some people that she is a Mexican Indian, who had been very beautiful in her youth, and who had become infatuated with an English tourist who admired her to such a degree that he married her—according to the rites of her nation. He was a false hearted caitiff, if he was an English lord. Having committed the folly of marrying the Indian woman, he should have been true to her—made the best of the bad bargain. Instead of which he grew tired of her, and finally abandoned her."

"Did he return to his native country, do you know?"

"He did not. She never gave him time. She went mad after he left her, followed him to New Orleans and tomahawked him on the steamboat. She was tried for murder, acquitted on the ground of insanity, and sent to a lunatic asylum. After a time she was discharged, or she escaped. It is not known which; most probably she escaped, as she certainly was not cured. She was as mad as a March hare all the time she lived here; but as she was harmless—comparatively harmless—it seemed nobody's business to have her shut up! And as I said, when at last I thought it was time to have her arrested on a charge of vagrancy, it was too late. She had fled."

"Why do you suspect that she had some knowledge of a plot to make away with the governor-elect?"

"I suspect that she was in the plot. Developments have led me to the conclusion. By these I learned that Rothsay was not murdered, as his friends feared, nor abducted, as some persons believed, but that he went away, and lived for many months among the Indians in the wilderness, without giving a sign of his identity to the people among whom he lived, or sending a hint of his whereabouts, or even of his existence, to his anxious friends. But that the massacre of Terrepeur—in which he was murdered and his hut was burned—occurred when it diid, we might never have learned his fate."

"Yet, still, I cannot see the ground upon which you suspect this Indian woman of complicity in the man's disappearance," said Cumbervale.

"But I am coming to that. Scythia was a Mexican Indian. It is well known to travelers that the Mexican Indians possess the secret of a drug which, when administered to a man, will not kill him, or do him any physical harm, but will reduce him to a state of abject imbecility, so that his free will is destroyed, and he may be led by any one who may wish to lead him. This drug administered to Rothsay, by the woman, must have so deprived him of his reason as to induce him to follow any one influencing him."

"What interest could she have had in reducing the man to this state of dementia?"

"She had been like a mother to the young man, and had sheltered him in her hut for years, when he had no other home. She was very much attached to this adopted son of hers; she was longing to go back to her tribe and die among her own people. It may be that she wished to take him with her, and so give him the drug that destroyed his will. Or, she may have been the tool of others. All this is the merest conjecture. But the facts remain that she foretold his fate, and that she vanished on the same day on which he disappeared, and that he remained in exile, voluntarily, until he was murdered by the Indians. Still—there might have been another cause for this self-expatriation."

"May I inquire its nature?"

"No, duke; it is only in my secret thought. I have no just right to speak of it to you. But if the question be not indiscreet, will you tell me why you take so deep

an interest in the unreliable story of this Indian woman's life?"

"Certainly; because the wild young blade who married and left her, and paid down his life for that desertion, was my own uncle, my father's elder brother, Earl Netherby, the heir to the dukedom, by whose death my father, and subsequently myself, succeeded to the title."

"You astonish me! Are you sure of this?"

"Reasonably sure. I was but five years old when my uncle came to bid us good-by, before setting out for America. But I remember his having on his finger a wonderful ring, a large solitaire diamond with certain flaws in it; but these flaws were very curious; they were faint traces left by the hand of nature shaping out a human eye. When ordinary mortals like myself looked at the diamond, they saw the delicate outline of an eye traced by the flaws in the stone; but it was said that whenever a clairvoyant looked into it they could see, not the human eye, but, as through a telescope, they could view the panorama of future events."

"What nonsense!" said Mr. Rockharrt.

"Nonsense, of course," assented the duke. "I did not speak of the ring on account of its supposed magic power, but because it was so peculiar a jewel that it would be impossible to mistake it for any other ring, or any other ring for itself; and to lead up to the statement that its discovery enabled me to identify the Mexican Indian woman with the maniac who murdered my uncle, as you will see very soon. When my uncle took leave of

us, my father, noticing the family talisman—which, by the way, was picked up by our ancestor, Raoul-de-Netherbie, the great Crusader, on the battlefield of Acre, and was said to have belonged to an Eastern magician, and has remained an heirloom with the head of our family ever since—inquired of his brother whether he was going to wear that outre jewel in open view upon his finger. My uncle answered that he was; and half laughing, and wholly incredulous, he added:

"'You know, Hugh, that this stone is a talisman against shipwrecks, fires, floods, robbery, murder, illness, and all the perils by land or by sea, and all the ills that flesh is heir to. While I wear this ring I expect to be safe from the evils of the world, the flesh, and the devil. So it shall never leave my living hand while I am away; but it shall bring me home safe to live to a patriarchal age and then die peacefully in my bed, with my children and children's children of many generations weeping and wailing around me.'

"These, or words to this effect, he was speaking, while I, standing by the chair in which he sat, toyed with his hand, and gazed curiously upon the talismanic jewel, and got into my mind an impression of it that never was lost. My uncle soon after left the house, and we never saw him alive again."

"He was the victim of this mad woman?"

"I know it. News was slow in those days. We seldom heard from my uncle. His letters were but the mark of the cities he stopped at. We had one letter

from Boston; a month later one from New York; a fortnight later, perhaps—for I only remember these matters by hearing them talked over by my parents—from Philadelphia; later still, and later, Baltimore, Washington, Nashville, New Orleans, and so on as he journeyed southward. Then came a long interval, during which we heard nothing from him, while all his family suffered the deepest anxiety, fearing that he had fallen a victim to the terrible fever that was then desolating the Crescent City. Then at length came a letter from his valet—a deep black-bordered letter—which announced the terrible news of the murder of his master by a Mexican Indian woman, supposed to be mad. There were no details, but only the explanation that he, the valet—who had seen the murder, which was the work of an instant—was detained in New Orleans as a witness for the prosecution, and should not be able to return home until after the trial. It was two months after the latter that the valet came back to England in charge of his late master's effects, which had all been sealed by the New Orleans authorities, and reached us intact. Only the family talisman was missing, and could nowhere be found. And as the family's prosperity, and even continuity, was supposed to depend upon the possession of that ring, its loss was considered only a less misfortune than my uncle's death. Later, my uncle's remains were brought home from New Orleans and deposited in the family vault at Cumbervale Castle.

"The ring was never again heard of. On the death

of my grandfather, the seventh duke, my father, who was the second son, succeeded to the title. But fortune seemed to have deserted us. By a series of unlucky land speculations my father lost nearly all his riches, which calamities preyed upon his mind so that his health broke down and he sank into premature old age and died. I came into the title with but little to support it. So that when I honestly loved a lady believed to be wealthy, my motives were supposed to be mercenary."

The Iron King might have felt this thrust, but he gave no sign. The duke continued:

"My after life does not concern the story of the ring. On learning, since my return from long travel in the East, that your fair granddaughter was widowed nearly two years before, you know I wrote to you asking her address, with a view of renewing my old suit. You replied by telling me that Mrs. Rothsay made her home with you, and inviting me to visit you. I refer to this only to keep the sequence of events in order. I came. Yesterday morning I went to Scythia's Roost, climbed from that shelf to the top of the mountain and viewed the scene from it. After I came down again to Scythia's Roost I sat down to rest. The sun was sinking behind the ridge, but through a crevice in the rocks a ray—'a line of golden light'—pierced and seemed to strike fire and bring out an answering ray from some living light, left in the ashes. I went to see what it was, and picked up the magic ring, the family talisman. There it was, the wonderful stone for which no other could possibly

be mistaken, the gem of intolerable light and fire that had to be shaded before it could be steadily looked at and before the delicate lines of its flaws delineating the human eye could be discerned. Here is the ring, Mr. Rockharrt. Examine it for yourself."

Mr. Rockharrt took the ring, examined it curiously, turned it toward the clouded window, then toward the blazing sea coal fire; in both positions it burned and sparkled just like any other diamond. Then he shaded it and looked at it through his eye-glasses; finally he shook his head and returned it to its owner, saying:

"It is a fine gem, barring a flaw, and I congratulate you on its recovery, but I see no human eye in it. I see some indistinct lines, fine as the thread of a spider's web, that is all. There is the breakfast bell, duke. We will go into the drawing room and find Cora. She must be down by this time."

Cora was standing at one of the front windows, looking out upon the driving rain. She turned as the two gentlemen entered the room, and responded to their greeting.

"Well, now we will go in to breakfast. Did the fresh venison come in time, Cora?"

"I think so, sir."

"We cook it on the breakfast table, duke, each one for himself. Put a slice on a china plate over a chafing dish. The only way to eat a venison cutlet," said old Aaron Rockharrt, as he led the way into the breakfast room, where his eyes were immediately rejoiced by the

sight of three chafing dishes filled with ignited charcoal ready for use, and a covered china dish, which he knew must contain the delicate venison cutlets.

When breakfast was over and they had all left the table, the Iron King, addressing his guest, said:

"Well, sir, I must be off to North End. I hope you will find some way of entertaining yourself within doors, for certainly this is not a day to tempt a man to seek recreation abroad. Nothing but business of importance could take me out in such weather."

"I regret that any cause should take you out, sir," replied the guest.

As soon as the noise of the wheels had died away, the duke, who had lingered in the hall to see his host depart, turned and entered the drawing room, where he found Cora as before, standing at a window looking out upon the dull November day.

"Will you permit me now to speak on the subject nearest my heart?" he pleaded, taking the hand which had dropped down by her side.

"I would rather that the subject had never been started, but under the circumstances, after what was said last night at dinner, I feel that the sooner we come to a perfect understanding the better it will be," said Cora, leading the way to a group of chairs and by a gesture inviting him to be seated. Then, to prevent him further committing himself and incurring a humiliating refusal, she herself took the initiative, and said:

"If any other person than Mr. Rockharrt had made

the public announcement that he did yesterday, I should have denounced the act as an unpardonable outrage; but of him I must say that he must have labored under some strange hallucination to have made such reckless assertions without one shadow of foundation. You yourself must have known that there was not one syllable of truth in his announcement."

"My dearest Mrs. Rothsay, I supposed that Mr. Rockharrt thought, even as I hoped, that our betrothal was but the question of a few days, or even of a few hours, and that he took the occasion of the family gathering to announce the fact. He had already given his consent to my suit for the blessing of your hand, and if he committed an indiscretion in that premature announcement I did not know it. I thought such announcement might be a local custom, and I blessed him in my heart for observing it. Cora!" he said, taking her hand and dropping his voice to a pleading tone, "dear Cora, it was only premature."

"Duke of Cumbervale," she answered, coldly and gravely, withdrawing her hand, "it is not premature. It was utterly false and groundless; it was the declaration of an engagement that not only had never taken place, but could never take place—an engagement forever impossible!"

"Oh, do not say that! I have kept my faith. After your grandfather's rejection of me in your name I could rest nowhere in England. I went to the Continent, and thence to the East, but still could rest nowhere, because

I was pursued by your image. When I came back to England, I learned that you had been widowed from your wedding day and almost as long as I had been absent. I determined to renew my suit, for I remembered that it was not you, but your grandfather in your name, who rejected my proposal. I remembered that you had once given me hope!"

"You refer to a time of sad self-deception on my part, which led me even to unconsciously deceiving you. My imaginary preference for you was a brief hallucination. Let it be forgotten. The memory to me is humiliating. You must think of me only as the wife of Regulas Rothsay."

"As the widow, you would say. Surely that widowhood can be no bar to my suit."

"I do not call myself the widow of Rule Rothsay, but his wife," said Cora, solemnly.

"But, my dear lady, surely death has——"

"Death has not," said Cora, fervently interrupting him, "death cannot sever two souls as united as ours. I mean to spend the years I have to live on earth, temporarily and partially separated from my husband, in good works of which he would approve; with which he would sympathize and which would draw his spirit into closer communion with mine; and I hope at that ascension to the higher life which we miscall death to meet him face to face, to be able to tell him, 'I have finished my work, I have kept the faith,' and to be with him forever in one of the many mansions of the Father's kingdom."

"I see," said the suitor, with a deep sigh, "that my suit would be utterly useless at present. But I will not give up the hope that is my life—the hope that you may yet look with favor on my love. I will merit that you should do so. Cora Rothsay, I will no longer vex you with my presence in this house. I will take leave of you even now, and only ask of your courtesy the use of a dog cart to take me to the North End Hotel."

"You are good, you are very good to me, and I pray with all my heart that you may meet some woman much more worthy of your grace than am I, and that you may be very happy. God bless you, Duke of Cumbervale," said Cora, earnestly.

He lifted her hand to his lips, kissed it, bowed over it and silently left the room.

Cora stepped after him and shut the door; then she hastened across the floor, threw herself down on the sofa, buried her face in the cushions and gave way to the flood of tears that flowed in sympathy with the pain she had given. Meantime the duke went up to his room and rang for his valet.

That grave and accomplished gentleman came at once.

"Dubois, go down and order the dog cart to be at the door in half an hour; then return here to assist me."

The Frenchman bowed profoundly and withdrew.

"I have come a long way for a disappointment," murmured the rejected lover, as he threw himself languidly upon the outside of the bed and clasped his hands over his head. "A fanatic she certainly is. A lunatic also

most probably. Yet I cannot get her out of my head. I would go to Canada—to Quebec—if it was not so abominably cold. Vane is there with the 110th. But the climate is too severe. I must move southward, not northward—southward, through California, and thence to the Sandwich Islands, New Zealand, and Australia. That will be a pleasant winter voyage. Talbot is at Sydney, and the climate, and the scenery, and the fruits and vegetables said to be the finest in the world. It will be a new experience, and if I can't forget her among soldiers and convicts, miners and bushmen—well, then, I will come back and make a third attempt. Well, Dubois, what is it?" This question to his valet, who just then re-entered the room.

"The carriage will be at the door on time, your grace."

"Right. Now attend to my directions. I am going immediately to North End, and shall leave there by the six o'clock express, en route for San Francisco. After I shall have left Rockhold you are to pack up my effects. I shall send a hack from the hotel to fetch them. Be very sure to be ready."

The duke went out and entered the dog cart, received his valise from his valet, gave the order to the groom and was driven off without having again seen Cora.

But from behind the screen of her lace-curtained window she watched his departure.

"I hope he will soon forget me," she murmured, as she turned away and went downstairs to the library to

look over the morning papers, which she had not yet seen. But before she touched a paper her eyes were attracted by a letter stuck in the letter rack, directed to herself in her brother's well-known handwriting.

"To think that my grandfather should have neglected to give me my letter," she complained, as she seized and opened it.

It was dated Fort Farthermost, and announced the fact of the regiment's arrival at the new quarters near the boundary line of Texas, "in the midst of a wilderness infested with hostile Indians, half-breeds, wild beasts, rattlesnakes and tarantulas. Only two companies are to remain here; my company—B—for one. Two first lieutenants are married men, but they have not brought their wives. One of the captains is a widower, and the other an old bachelor. In point of fact, there are only two ladies with us—the colonel's wife and the major's. And when they heard from me that my sister was coming to join me, they were delighted with the idea of having another lady for company. All the same, Cora, I do not advise you to come here. Will write more in a few days; must stop now to secure the mail that goes by this train—wagon and mule train to Arkansaw City, my dear."

This was the substance of the young lieutenant's letter to his sister.

"But, 'all the same,' I shall go," said Corona. And she sat down to answer her brother's letter.

CHAPTER XII

A DOMESTIC STORM

It is a truth almost too trite for reference, that in the experience of every one of us there are some days in which everything seems to go wrong. Such a day was this 13th of November to the Iron King.

When he reached North End that morning, the first thing that met him in his private office was the news that certain stocks had fallen. The news came by telegraph, and put him in a terrible temper.

This was about ten o'clock. Two hours later it was discovered that one of the minor bookkeepers, a new employee who had come well recommended about a month before, had just absconded with all he could lay his hands on—only a few thousand dollars—the merest trifle of a loss to Rockharrt & Sons, but extremely exasperating under the circumstances. So taking one provocation with another, at noon on that 13th of November old Aaron Rockharrt was about the maddest man on the face of the earth.

It was his custom to lunch with his sons in the private parlor of Mr. Clarence's suite of rooms at the North End Hotel, every day at two o'clock.

To-day, however, he showed no disposition to eat or drink. And although the two younger men were famished for food they dared not go to lunch without him or even urge him to make an effort to go with them. It was then three o'clock, an hour later than their usual hour, that Mr. Rockharrt made a movement in the desired way by rising, stretching his limbs, and saying:

"We will go to the hotel and get something to eat."

The three men crossed the street and went directly to Mr. Clarence's room, where the table for luncheon was set out. But there was nothing on it but cut bread, casters, and condiments, for these men always preferred hot luncheon in cold weather, and it was yet to be dished up.

The Iron King was not in a humor to wait. He hurried the servants. And at length when the dishes, which had been punctually prepared for two o'clock, were placed on the table at twenty minutes past three, everything was overdone, dried up, and indigestible.

It was the Iron King's own fault for not coming to the table when the meal was first prepared to order. But he would not admit that into consideration. He ordered the waiter to take everything away and throw it out of doors, declared that he would have a restaurant started on the opposite side of the street where a man could get a decent meal, and rose from the table in a rage.

It was while the Iron King was in this amiable and promising state of mind that a waiter brought in a card and laid it before him. He took it up and read aloud:

"The Duke of Cumbervale."

"Show him in," said Mr. Rockharrt.

A few minutes later the visitor entered the parlor, bowed to his host, and then shook hands with the two younger men, whom he had not seen since the evening before.

"So you braved the storm after all, duke? You found the old house too dreary for a long, rainy day. Take a seat," said Mr. Rockharrt, waving his hands majestically around the chairs.

"No; it was not the weather that made Rockhold insupportable to me. But, sir, I have come a long way for a great disappointment," said the rejected lover.

"What! what! what! Explain yourself, if you please, sir!" exclaimed the Iron King, bending his heavy gray brows over flashing eyes.

"Mrs. Rothsay has rejected me!"

"What! what! Rejected you! Why, your engagement was declared in the family conclave only last night."

"Mrs. Rothsay states that the declaration was erroneous, and that no such engagement ever has been or ever could be made between us."

"How dare she say that? How dare she try to break off with you in this scandalous manner? But she shall not! She shall keep faith with you or she is no granddaughter of mine! I will have nothing to do with false women! How did this breach occur? Tell me all

about it! Fabian—Clarence! Go about your business. I want to have some private conversation with the duke!"

The two younger men, thus summarily dismissed, nodded to the visitor and left the room, glad enough to go down below to the saloon and get something to eat and drink.

"Now, then, sir, what's the row with my granddaughter?" demanded the Iron King, wheeling his chair around to face his visitor.

"There is no 'row,'" said the young man, with the faintest possible hint of disgust in his tone and manner. "Mrs. Rothsay rejects me, positively, absolutely. She repudiates the announcement of our betrothal as unauthorized and erroneous."

"But you know, as we all know, that she was engaged to you! Yes; and she shall keep her engagement. I'll see to that!"

"Pardon me, Mr. Rockharrt, I am grieved to say that you have made a mistake. The lady was right. There was no engagement between Mrs. Rothsay and myself at the time you made that announcement, nor has there been one since, nor, I fear, can there ever be."

"Sir!" exclaimed the Iron King, rising in his wrath. "Did you not come to this country, for the express purpose of asking my granddaughter's hand in marriage? Did I not promise her hand to you in marriage?"

"You did, provi——"

"Then if that did not constitute an engagement, I do

now know what does—that is all. But some people have very loose ideas about honor. You ask the hand of my granddaughter; I bestow it on you, and announce the fact to my family."

"Pardon me, Mr. Rockharrt, you promised me the hand of your granddaughter, provided she should be willing to give it to me."

" 'Provided' nothing of the sort, sir. I gave her hand unconditionally, absolutely, and announced the betrothal to the family."

"But, my dear Mr. Rockharrt, the lady's consent is a most necessary factor in such a case as this," urged the young man, who began to think that the despotic egotism of the Iron King had in these later years grown into a monomania, deceiving him into the delusion that his power over family and dependents was that of an absolute monarch over his subjects. This opinion was confirmed by the next words of the autocrat.

"Of course her consent would follow my act. That was taken for granted."

"But, sir, her consent did not follow your act. Quite the contrary; for my rejection followed it. It is of no use to multiply words. The affair is at an end. I have bidden good-by to Mrs. Rothsay. I am here to say good-by to you."

"You cannot mean it!"

"I have left Rockhold finally. I shall leave North End by this 6:00 P. M. train, en route for the South," continued the rejected lover.

"Then, by ——! if she has driven you out of my house, she shall go herself! I have done the best I could for the woman, and she has repaid me by ingratitude and rebellion. And she shall leave my house at once!" exclaimed the despot in a tone of savage resolution.

"Mr. Rockharrt, I must beg that you will not visit my disappointment on the head of your unoffending granddaughter."

"Duke of Cumbervale, you must not venture to interfere with me in the discipline of my own family. I don't very much like dukes. I think I said that once before. I rejected you for my granddaughter two years ago when she was bound to Rule Rothsay. Now that she is a widow and is free, I accepted your suit and bestowed her on you, not that I like dukes any better now than I did then, but I like you better as a man."

The young duke bowed with solemn gravity at this compliment, repressing the smile that fluttered about his lips. At this moment a waiter entered the room, and said that "the gentleman's" servant had arrived with his master's luggage, and requested to know where it was to be put.

"Tell him to get his dinner, and then take the luggage in the same carriage to the station," said the duke, and the messenger withdrew.

"Have you lunched, duke?" inquired Mr. Rockharrt, mindful, even in his rage, of his duties as a host.

"I have not thought of doing so," replied the young man.

"Umph! I suppose not!" grunted the Iron King, as he rang the bell.

A waiter appeared.

"Any game in the house?"

"Yes, sir; fine venison."

"Don't want venison—had it for breakfast. Anything else?"

"A very fine wild turkey, sir."

"Bother! Takes three hours to dress, and I want a hot lunch got up in twenty-five minutes, at longest. Any small game?"

"Uncommon fine partridges, sir."

"Then have a dozen dressed and sent up, with proper accompaniments; and lose no time about it! Also put a bottle of Johannisberg on ice."

"Yes, sir."

The waiter vanished.

"I must bid you good-by now, Mr. Rockharrt," said the duke, rising.

"No; you must not. Sit down. Sit down. You must lunch with me, and drink a parting glass of wine. Then you will have plenty of time to secure your train, and I to drive to Rockhold at my usual hour. Say no more, duke. Keep your seat."

Cumbervale looked at the iron gray man before him, thought certainly this must be their last meeting and

parting on earth, and that therefore he would not cross the patriarch in his humor.

"You are very kind. Thank you. I will break a parting bottle of wine with you willingly."

In double-quick time the broiled partridges were served, the wine placed, and all was ready for the two men.

"Go and tell Mr. Fabian and Mr. Clarence that I wish them to come here. You will find them somewhere in the house," said Mr. Rockharrt.

"Beg pardon, sir; both gentlemen have gone over to the works," replied the waiter.

This was true. Both "boys" had gorged themselves with cold ham, bread and cheese, washed down with quarts of brown stout, and were in no appetite to enjoy partridge and Johannisberg, even if they had been found in the hotel.

"Glad they have found out that they must be attentive to business. You and I, duke, will discuss the good things on the table before us. Come."

The two lingered over the luncheon until it was time for the duke to start for the depot.

"I will send over for my two sons, that you may bid them good-by," said Mr. Rockharrt, and he turned to the waiter, and told him to go and dispatch a messenger to that effect.

Messrs. Fabian and Clarence soon put in an appearance, and expressed their surprise and regret at the sudden departure of their father's guest, and their hope and

trust to see him again in the near future. Neither of them seemed to know that the betrothal declared at the dinner table on the night before had no foundation in fact. The duke thanked them for their good wishes, invited them to visit him if they should find themselves in England, and then he took a final leave of the Rockharrts, entered the carriage, and drove off, through a pouring rain, to the railway station—and out of their lives forever.

"A fine thing Mistress Rothsay has done!" exclaimed the Iron King, when his guest had gone, and he explained Cora's action.

Corona had spent the day at Rockhold drearily enough. She felt reasonably sure that her rejection of the duke's hand would deeply offend her grandfather and precipitate a crisis in her own life. When she had finished her letter to her brother, in which she told him of the death of Mr. Rockharrt's wife and added her own resolution soon to set out to join him in his distant fort, she began to make preparations for her journey in the event of having to leave Rockhold suddenly. She knew her grandfather's temper and disposition, and felt that she must hold herself in readiness to meet any emergencies brought about by their manifestations. So she set about her preparations.

She had not much to do. The trunks that she had packed and dispatched to the North End railway station three months before at the hour when her own journey

was arrested by the accident to her grandfather had remained in storage there ever since.

The contents of her large valise, which was to have been her own traveling companion in her long journey to and through the "Great American Desert," and which was well packed with several changes of clothes and with small dressing, sewing and writing cases, supplied all her wants during the three months of her further sojourn at Rockhold.

She had only now to collect these together, cause all the soiled articles to be laundered, and then repack the valise. This occupied her all the afternoon of the short November day.

At six o'clock she came down into the parlor to see that the lamps were trimmed and lighted, and the coal fire stirred up and replenished, so that her grandfather should find the room warm and comfortable on his return home. Then she brought out his dressing gown and slippers, hung the first over his arm chair and put the last on the warm hearthstones.

At length the carriage wheels were heard faintly over the soft, wet avenue and under the pouring rain.

Old John, waiting in the hall to be ready to open the door in an instant, did so before the Iron King should leave the carriage, and hoisting a very large umbrella, he went out to the carriage door and held it over his master while they walked back to the house and entered the hall.

"Here! take off my rubber cloak! Take off my over-

coat! Now my rubber boots! What a night!" exclaimed the old man, as he came out of his shell, or various shells.

Corona had the pitcher of punch on the table now with a cut-glass goblet beside it.

"I hope you have not taken cold, grandfather," she said, drawing his easy chair nearer the fire.

"Hold your tongue! Don't dare to speak to me! Leave the room this instant! John! come in here. Pour me out a glass of that punch, and while I sip it draw off my boots and put on my slippers," said the Iron King, throwing himself into his big easy chair and leaning back.

Corona was more pained than surprised. She had expected something like this from the Iron King. She replied never a word, but passed into the adjoining dining room and sat down there. Through the open door she could see the old gentleman reclining at his ease, and sipping his fragrant hot punch while old John drew off his boots, rubbed his feet, and put on his warm slippers. Presently the waiter brought in the soup, put it on the table, and rang the dinner bell. Mr. Rockharrt put down his empty glass, and arose and came to the table. Cora took her place at the head of the board, hardly knowing whether she would be allowed to remain there. But her grandfather took not the slightest notice of her. She filled his plate with soup, and put it on the waiter held by the young footman, who carried it to his master. In this manner passed the whole dinner in

every course. Corona carved or served the dishes, filled the plate for her grandfather, which was taken to him by the footman. At the end of the heavy meal the Iron King arose from the table and said:

"I am going to my own room. Mistress Rothsay, I shall have something to say to you in the morning"; and he went out.

CHAPTER XIII

CORONA'S OPPORTUNITY

Corona Rothsay stood behind her chair at the head of the breakfast table, waiting for Mr. Rockharrt. He entered presently, and returned no answer to her respectful salutation, but moodily took his seat, raised the cover from the hot dish before him, and helped himself to a broiled partridge. After the gloomy meal was finished the Iron King arose from the table and pushed back his chair so suddenly and forcibly as to nearly upset his servant.

"Come into the library! I wish to have a decisive talk with you!" he said, in a harsh voice, to his granddaughter, as he strode from the dining room.

Corona, who had finished her own slight breakfast some minutes before, immediately arose and followed him. On reaching the bookery, old Aaron Rockharrt sank heavily into his big leathern armchair, and pointed, sternly, to an opposite one, on which Corona obediently seated herself.

"Look at me, mistress!" he said, placing his hands upon the arms of his chair, bending forward and gazing on her with fixed, keen eyes, that burned like fire beneath the pent roof of his shaggy iron-gray brows.

Corona looked up at him.

"Do you know, madam, that in rejecting the hand of the Duke of Cumbervale you have offered me an unpardonable affront?"

"No, grandfather, I did not know it; and certainly I never meant—never could possibly have meant—to affront you," said Corona, deprecatingly. "If I have been so unhappy as to disappoint your wishes, I am very sorry, my dear grandfather, but——"

He harshly interrupted her.

"Do not you dare to call me grandfather, either now or ever again! I disclaim forever that relationship, and all relationship with the false, flirting, coquettish, unprincipled creature that you are! Your late suitor may forgive your treachery to him, beguiling him by your once pretended preference to pass by all eligible matches and cross the ocean for your sake! Yes, he may forgive you, because he is a fool (being a duke)! But as for me—I will never pardon the outrageous affront you have put upon me, in rejecting the man of my choice! Never, as long as I live, so help me——"

"Oh!—oh, grandfather!" cried Corona, arresting his half-sworn oath, "don't say that! I am sorry to have crossed your will in this matter, or in any way; but, oh, my dear grandfather——"

"Stop there!" vociferated the Iron King, with a stamp. "I am no grandfather of yours! How dare you insult me with the name when I have forbidden you to do so?"

"I beg your pardon, sir. It was a mere slip of the tongue. I spoke impulsively. I had forgotten your prohibition. I shall not certainly offend in that way again," said Corona, quietly.

"You had better not!"

"I was about to say, when you interrupted me," resumed Cora, earnestly, "that I am grieved to have been compelled to disappoint you by rejecting the Duke of Cumbervale; but, sir, I could not do otherwise. I could not accept a man whom I could not love. To have done so would have been a great sin. Surely, sir, you must know it would have been a sin," pleaded Corona.

"Stuff and nonsense!" roared the Iron King. "Don't dare to talk such sentimental rubbish to me! You can't love him, can't you? Tell that to an idiot, not to me! When we were in London, two or three years ago, you loved him so well that you were ready to break your engagement with your betrothed husband, Regulas Rothsay, in order to marry this duke. Yes; and you would certainly have done so if I had not put a stop to the affair by having an explanation with the suitor, telling him of your prior engagement, and also of your want of fortune, and bringing you back home to your forgotten duties."

"Oh, sir, I deserve all your reproaches for that forgetfulness. I was very wrong then," said Cora, with a sigh.

"Bosh! You are always wrong!" sneered old Aaron Rockharrt. "And you always will be wrong! You

were wrong when you wished to break your engagement with Regulas Rothsay to marry the Duke of Cumbervale, and you are wrong, now that you are free, to reject the man. Why, look at it: Now that you have been a widow for more than two years, and Cumbervale has proved his constancy by remaining a bachelor two years for your sake, and crossing the ocean and coming down here to propose for you again, and even after I—I myself—have positively promised him your hand, and have given a family dinner in honor of the occasion, and have announced the engagement, and after speeches have been made and toasts have been drunk to the happiness and prosperity of your married life, and all due formalities of betrothal had been observed, then, mistress, what do you do?" severely demanded old Aaron Rockharrt.

"Only my duty under the circumstances. I was not in the least bound or compromised by or responsible for anything that was said or done at that dinner table," replied Corona.

"This is what you do: You dare to set me at defiance! You dare to set your will against mine! You dare to reject the man whom I chose for your husband, whom I announced as your betrothed husband! You dare to drive him away from my house, grieved, disappointed, humiliated, to become a wanderer over the face of the earth for your sake, even as you drove Regulas Rothsay from the goal of his ambition into exile, and——"

A sharp cry from Corona suddenly stopped him in full career.

"Do not, oh! do not speak of that! I—I would have given my life to have prevented Rule's loss, if I could! As for this man—this duke—he is nothing whatever to me and never can be!"

"And yet you were ready to fall down and worship him three years ago!"

"It was a brief insanity—a self-delusion. That is past. Cumbervale never was and never can be anything to me. No man can ever be anything to me! I could not live Rule's wife, but I will die Rule's widow; and I do not care how soon—the sooner the better, if it were the Lord's will!" moaned Corona.

"Drivel!" angrily exclaimed old Aaron Rockharrt. "I am tired of your idiotic, imbecile hypocrisies! Here are two men driven away by your unprincipled vacillation—to call your conduct by the lightest name. One driven to his death; one driven, it may be, to his ruin. It is quite time you were sent to follow your victims. Look you! I am just about to start for North End. I shall return home at my usual time this evening. Do not let me find you here when I arrive, for I never wish to see your false face again!" said the Iron King, rising from his arm chair and striding from the room.

Corona started up and ran after him, pleading, imploring—

"Grandfather! Dear grandfather! Oh, I beg par-

don! I forgot! Sir! sir! Oh, do not part from me in this way!"

He turned sharply, stared at her mockingly, and then demanded:

"Come! Shall I call Cumbervale back? Tell him that you have changed your whirligig mind, and are ready to marry him, if he will only take time by the forelock and return before you shift around again? I can easily do that. I can send a telegram that will overtake him and turn him back so promptly that he may be here in twenty-four hours! Come! Shall I do that?"

Corona, who had been gazing at the mocking speaker scarcely knowing whether he spoke in earnest or in irony, now answered despairingly:

"Oh, no, no! not for the world! I have not changed my mind. I could not do so for any cause."

"Then don't stop me. I'm in haste. I am going to North End. Don't let me find you here when I come back. Don't let me ever see or hear from you again, without your consent to marry the man I have chosen for you. John!"

"Oh, sir, consider——" began Corona, pleadingly.

"John!" vociferated the Iron King, pushing rudely past her.

The old servant came hurrying up, helped his master on with his overcoat and with his rubber coat, then gave him his hat and gloves, and finally hoisted a large umbrella to hold over his master's head as he passed from the house to the carriage in front.

Corona stood watching until the carriage rolled away and old John came back into the hall and closed the door. Then she returned to the library and sank sobbing into the big leathern chair. She now realized for the first time what the parting with her grandfather would be—the parting with the gray old man who had been the ogre of her childhood, the terror of her youth, and the autocrat of her maturity, and yet whom, by all the laws of nature, she tenderly loved, and whom by the commandment of God she was bound to honor.

She glanced mechanically toward the card rack, and saw there another letter in the handwriting of her brother—a letter that had come in the morning's mail and had been stuck up there, and in the excitement of the hour had been neglected or forgotten.

She seized it eagerly and tore it open, wondering what could have urged Sylvan to write so soon after his last letter.

It was dated three weeks later than the one she had received only the day previous, the first one having, no doubt, been delayed somewhere along the uncertain route.

In this letter Sylvan complained that he had not received a word from his dear sister since leaving Governor's Island, and mentioned that he himself had written all along the line of march and three times since the arrival of his regiment at Fort Farthermost.

But he admitted, also, that the mails beyond the regular United States mail roads were very uncertain and

irregular. Then he came to the object of this particular epistle.

"It is, my dear Cora, to tell you," he wrote, "that if you should still be resolved to come out and join me here, an opportunity for your safe conduct will be offered you this autumn which may never occur again. Our senior captain—Captain Neville, Company A—has been absent on leave for several months. So he did not come out here with the regiment. His leave expires on the 30th of November. He will be obliged to start in the latter part of October in order to have time enough to accomplish the tedious journey by wagon from Leavenworth to Fort Farthermost, which is, as I believe I told you, in the southern part of the Indian Reserve, bordering on Texas. He is to bring his wife with him.

"But our colonel thinks it is I who want you, and, moreover, I who need you; for he says that, next to a wife, a sister is the best safeguard a young officer can have out in these frontier forts, and he gave me the address of Captain Neville and advised me to write to him and ask him and his wife to take charge of my sister on the route.

"And then, dear, he went further than that. He took my letter after I had written it, and inclosed it in one from himself. So now, my dear, all you have to do is to go to Washington, call on Mrs. Neville, at Brown's Hotel, Pennsylvania Avenue, and send up your card. She will expect you. Then you must hold yourself in readiness to start when the captain and his wife do."

Cora had no time to indulge in reverie. She must be up and doing.

Her luggage had long been stored in the freight house of the North End railway station, and her traveling bags had been packed the day before. The servants knew she was going out to join her brother, though they did not know that her grandfather had discarded her. She had very little to do for herself on that day, but she resolved to do all that she could for the comfort of her grandfather before she should leave the house forever.

So she went and ordered the dinner—just such a dinner as she knew he would like. Then she called old John to her presence and directed him to have the parlor prepared for his master just as carefully as if she herself were on the spot to see it done; to have the fire bright; the hearth clean; the lamps trimmed and lighted; the shutters closed and the curtains drawn; the easy chair, with dressing gown and slippers, before the fire, and, lastly, a jug of hot punch on the hearth.

Old John promised faithfully to perform all these duties. Then Cora went and wrote two letters.

One to her brother Sylvan, in which she acknowledged the receipt of his letter, expressed her thanks to the colonel for his kindness, and assured him that she should gladly avail herself of the escort of the Nevilles and go out under their protection to Fort Farthermost.

This letter she put in the mail bag in the hall ready for the messenger to take to the North End postoffice.

The second letter was a farewell to her grandfather,

in which she expressed her sorrow at leaving him even at his own command; her grief at having offended him, however unintentionally; her prayers for his forgiveness, and her hope to meet him again in health, happiness and prosperity.

This letter Corona stuck on the card rack, where he would be sure to find it.

Then she ordered her own little pony carriage, and went and put on her bonnet and her warm fur-lined cloak and called Mark to bring her shawls and traveling bags down to the hall.

When all this had been done, Corona called all the servants together, made them each a little present, and then bade them good-by.

Then she stepped into the little carriage and bade the groom to drive on to Violet Banks.

"I think I shall go no further than that to-night, my friends, and leave for Washington to-morrow morning," she said, in a broken voice, as the pony started.

"Then all ob us wot kin get off will come to bid yer annurrer good-by to-morrow mornin'!" came hoarsely from one of the crowd, and was repeated by all in a chorus.

The carriage rolled down the avenue to the ferry—not that Corona intended to cross the river, for Violet Banks, it will be remembered, was on the same side and a few miles north of Rockhold—but that she would not leave the place without taking leave of old Moses, the ferryman. Fortunately the boat lay idle at its wharf,

and the old man sat in the ferry house, hugging the stove and smoking his pipe.

He came out at the sound of wheels. Corona called him to the carriage, told him that she did not want to cross the river, but that she was going away for a while and wished to take leave of him.

Now old Moses had seen too many arrivals and departures to and from Rockhold to feel much emotion at this news; besides he had no idea of the gravity of this departure. So he only touched his old felt hat and said:

"Eh, young mist'ess, hopes how yer'll hab a mons'ous lubly time! Country is dull for de young folks in de winter. Gwine to de city, s'pose, young mist'ess?"

"Yes, Uncle Moses, I'm going to Washington first," replied Corona.

"Lors! I hear tell how so many folkses do go to Washintub! Wunner wot dey go for? in de winter, too! Lors! Well, honey, I wish yer a mighty fine time and a handsome husban' afore yer comes home. Lor' bress yer, young mist'ess!"

"Thank you, Uncle Moses. Here is a trifle for you," said Cora, putting a half eagle in his hand.

"Lor' bress yer, young mist'ess; how I do t'ank yer wid all my heart! I nebber had so much money at one time in all my life!" exclaimed the overjoyed old ferryman.

CHAPTER XIV

FAREWELL TO VIOLET BANKS

Along the north road, between the thickly wooded east ridge and the swiftly running river, Corona drove on her last journey through that valley. Three miles up, the road turned from the river, and, with several windings and doublings, ascended the mountain side to the elevated plateau on which were situated the beautiful house and grounds called Violet Banks.

As the carriage reached the magnificent plateau, Corona stopped the horse for a moment to take in the glory of the view. In the midst of her admiration of this scenery, two distinct thoughts were strongly borne in on the mind of Corona. One was that Violet Rockharrt would never be willing to leave this enchanting spot to make her home at Rockhold. She might consent to do so to please others, but she would suffer through it.

The other thought was that old Aaron Rockharrt would never consent to live in a place which, however beautiful it might be, was too difficult of access and egress for a man of his age.

What, then, could be done to cheer the old man's solitude at his home? The only hope lay in the chance of

Mr. Clarence finding a wife who might be acceptable to his father, and bringing her home to Rockhold.

The carriage drew up before the long, low villa, with its vine-clad porch, where, though the roses had faded and fallen, the still vivid green foliage and brilliant rose berries made a gay appearance.

Violet was not sitting on the porch, beside her little wicker workstand basket, as she always had been found by Cora in the earlier months of her residence there, but, nevertheless, she saw her visitor's approach from the front windows of her sitting room, and ran out to meet her.

"Oh, so glad to see you! And such a delightful surprise!" were the words with which she caught Cora in her arms, as the latter alighted from the carriage.

"How well you look, dear. A real wood violet now, in your pretty purple robe," said Corona, with assumed gayety, as she returned the little creature's embrace, and went with her into the house.

"I am going to send the carriage to the stable. You shall spend the afternoon and evening with me, whether you will or not, and whether the handsome lover breaks his heart or not!" exclaimed Violet, as they entered the parlor.

"Don't trouble yourself, dear. See, the man is driving around to the stable now, and I have come, not only to spend the afternoon, but the night with you," said Cora, sitting down and beginning to unfasten her fur

cloak. "Will my uncle be late in returning this evening?"

"Fabian? Oh, no! this is his early day. He will be home very soon now. But where did you leave his grace? Why did he not escort you here?" inquired the little lady.

"Have you not heard that he has left Rockhold?" asked Corona, in her turn.

"Why, no. I have heard nothing about him since the night of the dinner given in honor of your betrothal. Are you tired, Cora, dear? You look tired. Shall I show you to your room, where you may bathe your face?" inquired Violet, noticing for the first time the pale and weary aspect of her visitor.

"No; but you may bring the baby here to see me."

"My baby? Oh, the little angel has just been put to sleep—its afternoon sleep. Come into the nursery, and I will show it to you," exclaimed the proud and happy mother, starting up and leading the way to the upper floor and to a front room over the library, fitted up beautifully as a nursery. Corona, on entering, was conscious of a blending of many soft bright colors, and of a subdued rainbow light, like changes of the opal.

Violet led her directly to the cradle, an elegant structure of fine light wood, satin and lace, in which was enshrined the jewel, the treasure, the idol of the household —a tiny, round-headed, pink-faced little atom of humanity, swathed in flannel, cambric and lace, and covered with fine linen sheets trimmed with lace, little

lamb's-wool blankets embroidered with silk, and a coverlet of satin in alternate tablets of rose, azure and pearl tablets.

The delighted mother and the admiring visitor stood gazing at the babe, and talking in low tones for ten or fifteen minutes perhaps, and were then admonished by the nurse—an experienced woman—that it was not good for such young babies to be looked over and talked over so long when they were asleep.

Violet and her visitor softly withdrew from the cradle, and Corona had leisure to look around the lovely room, the carpet of tender green, like the first spring grass, and dotted over with buttercups and daisies; the wall paper of pearl white, with a vine of red and white roses running over it; the furniture of curled maple, upholstered in fine chintz, in colors to match the wall paper. But the window curtains were the marvels of the apartment. There were two high front windows, draped in rainbow silk—that is, each breadth of the hangings was in perfect rainbow stripes, and the effect of the light streaming through them was soft, bright and very beautiful.

"It is a creation! Whose?" inquired Corona, as she stood before one of the windows.

"Well, it was my idea, though I am not at all noted for ideas, as everybody knows," said Violet, with a smile. "But I wanted my baby's first impressions of life to be serenely delightful through every sense. I wanted her to see, when she should open her eyes in the

morning, a sphere of soft light and bright, delicate shades of color. So I prepared this room."

"But where did you find the rainbow draperies?"

"Oh, them! I designed them for my baby, and Fabian sent the pattern to Paris, and we received the goods in due time. I will tell you another thing. I have an Æolian harp for her. It is under the front window of the upper hall, but its aerial music can reach her here when it is in place. When she is a little stronger I am going to have a music box for her. Oh, I want my little baby to live in a sphere of 'sweet sights, sweet sounds, soft touches.'"

A brisk, firm footstep, a cheery, ringing voice in the hall below, arrested the conversation of the two women.

"It is Fabian! Come!" exclaimed Violet, joyfully, leading the way downstairs.

Mr. Fabian stood at the foot. He embraced his young wife boisterously, and then seeing Cora coming downstairs behind Violet, went and shook hands with his niece, saying:

"Glad to see you! Glad to see you! Has Violet been showing you our little goddess? I tell you what, Cora: everything has changed since that usurper came. This place is no longer 'Violet Banks.' It is the Holy Hill. This house is the temple; that nursery is the sanctuary; that cradle is the altar; and that babe is the idol of the community. Now go along with Violet. Oh! she is high priestess to the idol. Go along. I'm

going to wash my face and hands, and then I'll join you."

Mr. Fabian went upstairs, and Cora followed Violet into the parlor.

"Here are the English magazines, my dear, come this morning. Will you look over them, while I go and see to the dinner table? I will not be gone more than ten minutes," said Violet, lifting a pile of pamphlets from a side table and placing them on a little stand near the easy chair into which Corona had thrown herself.

"Certainly, Violet, love. Don't mind me. Go."

Violet kissed her forehead and left the room.

Cora never touched the magazines, but sat with her elbow on the stand and her forehead resting on her hand.

She sat motionless, buried in painful thought until her Uncle Fabian entered the room.

Then she looked up.

He came and sat down near her; looked at her inquiringly for a few moments; and then, as she did not break the silence, he said:

"Well, Cora?"

"Well, Uncle Fabian?"

"What is up, my dear?"

"I would rather defer all explanations until after dinner, if you please."

"Very well, my dear Cora."

And, indeed, there was no time for further talk just

then, for Violet came hurrying into the room laughing and exclaiming:

"I am the pink of punctuality, Cora, dear. Here I am back again in just ten minutes."

The next moment the dinner bell rang, and they all went into the dining room.

Violet—trained by Mrs. Chief Justice Pendletime, who was a great domestic manager—excelled in every housekeeping department, especially, perhaps, in the culinary art; so the little dinner was an exquisite one, and thoroughly enjoyed by the master and mistress of the house, and might have been equally appreciated by their visitor if her sad thoughts had not destroyed her appetite.

After dinner, when they adjourned to the parlor, Violet said:

"Again I must beg you to excuse me, Cora, dear, while I go up and put baby to sleep. It is a little weakness of mine, but I always like to put her to sleep myself, though I have the most faithful of all nurses. You will excuse me?"

"Why, of course, darling!" Corona heartily replied; and the happy little mother ran off.

"Now, then, Cora, what is it? You said you would explain after dinner. Do so now, my dear; for if it is anything very painful I would rather not have my Wood Violet grieved by hearing it," said Mr. Fabian, drawing his chair nearer to that of Corona.

"It is very painful, Uncle Fabian, and I also would

like to shield Violet as much as possible from the grief of knowing it. But—is it possible that you do not know what has happened at Rockhold?" gravely inquired Corona.

"I know this much: That the announcement of an engagement between yourself and the Englishman was premature and unauthorized; that you have finally rejected the suitor—who has since left Rockhold—and by so doing you have greatly enraged our Iron King. I know no more than that, Cora."

"What! Has not my grandfather told you anything to-day?"

"Not one word."

"Then I must tell you. He has cast me off forever."

"Cora! Cora!"

"It is true, indeed. This morning he ordered me to quit his house; not to let him find me still there on his return; never to let him see or hear from me again unless it was with my consent to recall and marry my English suitor."

"But, Cora, my dear, why can you not come into his conditions? Why can you not marry Cumbervale? He is a splendid fellow every way, and he loves you as hard as a horse can kick. He is awfully in love with you, my dear. Now, why not marry him and make everybody happy and all serene?"

"Because, Uncle Fabian, I don't happen to be in love with him," replied Corona, with just a shade of disdain in her manner.

"Well, my dear, I will not undertake to persuade you to change your mind. If you have inherited nothing else from the Iron King, you have his strength of will. What are you going to do, Cora?"

"I am going to carry out my purpose of going to the Indian Reserve as missionary to the Indian tribes, to devote all my time and all my fortune to their welfare."

"A mad scheme, my dear Cora. How are you, a young woman, going to manage to do this? Under the auspices of what church do you act?"

"Under that of the broad church of Christian charity —no other."

"But how are you going to reach the field of your labors? How are you going to cross those vast tracts, destitute of all inhabitants except tribes of savages, destitute of all roads except the government 'trails'?"

"You know, if you have not forgotten, that it was my purpose to join my brother at his post, and to establish my school near his fort and under its protection."

"Well, yes; I remember hearing something of the sort; but really, Cora, I thought it was all talk since Sylvan went away."

"But it is more than that. Some time late in this month I shall go out to Fort Farthermost under the protection of Captain and Mrs. Neville. They are now in Washington, where I am going immediately to join them. When you read this letter, which I received after my grandfather had left me in anger this morning, you will understand all about it," said Corona, drawing her

brother's last letter from her pocket and handing it to her uncle.

Mr. Fabian took it and read it carefully through; then returned it to her, saying:

"Well, my dear, it does seem as if there were a fate in all this. But what a journey is before you! At this season of the year, too! But, Cora, do not let Violet know that the grandfather has discarded you. It would grieve her tender heart too much. Just tell her that you are going out to your brother. Do not even tell her so much as that to-night. It would keep her from sleep."

"I will not hint the subject this evening, Uncle Fabian. I love Violet too much to distress her."

"You will have to explain that your engagement with the Englishman is at an end."

"Or rather that it has never had a beginning," said Corona.

"Very well," assented Mr. Fabian. "And now I must go and dispatch a messenger to North End to fetch Clarence here to spend the night. A hasty leave-taking at the railway depot would hardly satisfy Clarence, Cora."

"I know! And I thank you very much, Uncle Fabian," replied Corona.

"Ah, Violet! here you are, just in time to take my place. I am going out to send for Clarence to spend the evening with us," said Mr. Fabian, as he passed his young wife, who entered the room as he left it.

Instead of sending a messenger, Fabian put his fastest

horse into his lightest wagon, and set off at his best speed himself. He reached North End Hotel in twenty minutes, and burst in upon Clarence, finding that gentleman seated in an arm chair before a coal fire.

"Anything the matter, Fabian?" he inquired, looking up in surprise.

"Yes! The devil's to pay! The monarch has driven his granddaughter from court!" exclaimed the elder brother, throwing his hat upon the floor, and dropping into a chair.

"You don't mean to say——"

"Yes, I do! Father has turned Cora out of doors because she refused to marry the Englishman."

"Good Heaven!"

"Come! There is no time to talk! Cora is at my house. She leaves for Washington to join Captain and Mrs. Neville, and go out with them to Fort Farthermost."

"But look here, Fabian. Why do you let her do that?"

"Don't be a fool! Who is to stop her if she is bound to go? Come, hurry up; put on your overcoat and get into my trap, and I will take you back with me, see Cora, and stay all night with us."

Mr. Clarence started up, rang for a waiter to see to his rooms, then put on his overcoat, and in five minutes more he was seated beside his brother in the light wagon, behind the fastest horses in Mr. Fabian's stables, bowling out of the village at a rate of speed that I would not

dare to state. It was not nine o'clock when they reached Violet Banks.

Mr. Fabian drove around to the stables, gave his team up to the groom, and walked back to the house with Clarence.

"You must not drop a word to Violet about Cora's intended journey. She thinks that Cora has only come to spend the night with her. If she knew otherwise she would be too distressed to sleep. Not until after breakfast to-morrow is she to be told that Cora is going away; and never is she to know that our niece has been driven away."

"I understand, Fabian. Who is going to Washington with Cora?"

"No one that I know of; but she is quite able to take care of herself, so far."

"I will not have it so, Fabian. I will go with our niece!" said Mr. Clarence.

"Are you mad? The monarch would never forgive such misprision of treason. He would discard you, Clarence!" exclaimed Mr. Fabian, in consternation.

"I do not think so. Our father is too just for that. And in any case I shall take the risk."

"The Iron King is just in all his business relations; he would not be otherwise to save himself from bankruptcy. But has he been just to Cora?"

"From his point of view. He has not been kind; that is all. I must be kind to our niece at all costs."

This brought them to the door of the house, which

Mr. Fabian opened with his latch key, and the two men entered the parlor together.

"Why, how soon you have come! I am so glad!" exclaimed Violet, rising to welcome the new visitor.

"That is because, instead of sending, I went for him," explained Mr. Fabian.

"So I suspected when I found that you did not return immediately to the parlor," said Violet.

Mr. Clarence meanwhile went to his niece, took her hand and kissed her in silence. He could not trust his voice to speak. She understood him, and returned the pressure of his hand. If it had not been for Violet, the evening would have passed very gloomily; but she, who knew nothing of the domestic tempest that had driven Cora from home, nor even of the impending separation in the morning, and who heartily enjoyed the presence of her two favorite relatives in the house, kept the party enlivened by her own good spirits and gay talk.

Once during the evening Clarence and Cora found themselves far enough off from their friends for a short *tête-a-tête,* in which there was a brief but perfect explanation between them.

Then Clarence announced his intention of escorting her to Washington and seeing her safe under the protection of the Nevilles.

Cora strongly opposed this plan, on the ground that his escort was unnecessary and might be deeply offensive to Mr. Rockharrt.

But Clarence was firm.

"You may turn your back on me, Cora. You may refuse to speak to me during the whole journey. But you cannot prevent me from going on the same train with you, and so becoming your guardian on the journey," said Clarence.

Cora's answer to this was prevented by the approach of Violet, who said:

"Clarence, it is half past eleven o'clock, and Cora looks tired to death. Your room is ready whenever you would like to retire."

Acting upon this very broad hint, Mr. Clarence laughed, kissed his niece good-night, shook hands with his sister-in-law, and left the room, preceded by Mr. Fabian, who offered to show him to his chamber. Violet conducted Cora to the room prepared for her, and, with a warm embrace, left her to repose for the last time in that house.

CHAPTER XV

"IT IS THE UNEXPECTED THAT HAPPENS"

AFTER her exciting and fatiguing day, Corona slept long and heavily, and when she reached the family sitting room she found her two uncles there in conversation.

"I am sorry I kept you waiting, Uncle Fabian," she said, hurriedly.

"You have not done so, my dear. The bell has not yet rung."

"Then I'm glad. Good-morning, Clarence," she said, turning to her younger uncle.

"Good-morning, Cora. How did you sleep?"

"Perfectly, Clarence, dear. I hope you will set out for North End immediately after breakfast. I shall not start for Washington until to-night. I shall spend the day here, so that after telling Violet of my intended journey I may have some little time to reconcile her to it."

"How good you are, Cora. I do appreciate this consideration for Violet," said Mr. Fabian, earnestly.

"It is only her due, uncle. Well, Clarence, since you are determined to escort me to Washington, whether or

not, you may meet me at the depot for the 6:30 express. I feel that it is every way better that I should go by the night train; better for Violet, with whom I can thus spend a few more hours, and better for Clarence, who need not by this arrangement lose this day's work."

"Quite so," assented Mr. Fabian. "And now," he added, as light footsteps were heard approaching the room, "here comes Violet. Not a word about the journey until after breakfast."

They all went into the breakfast room, where a fragrant, appetizing meal was spread.

How different this was from the breakfast at Rockhold on the preceding day, darkened by the sullen wrath of the Iron King and eaten in the most gloomy silence! Here were affectionate attentions and jests and laughter. Violet was in such gay spirits that her vivacity became contagious, and Fabian and Clarence often laughed aloud, and Corona was won to smile at her sallies.

At last Mr. Fabian arose with a sigh, half of satisfied appetite, half of reluctance to leave the scene, and said:

"Well, I suppose we must be moving. Clarence, will you drive with me to North End?"

"Certainly. That is all arranged, you know," replied the younger brother.

Mr. Fabian walked out into the hall, saying as he left the breakfast room:

"Corona, a word with you, my dear."

Corona went to him, and he said:

"After you have had an explanation with Violet, persuade her to accompany you to North End. You had better come in your own pony carriage, my dear; it is so easy and the horse so safe. And then, after you have left us, I can drive her home in the same vehicle. And, by the way, my dear, what shall you do with that little turnout? Shall I send it to Hyde's livery stable for sale? You can get double what was given for it. And remit you the price?"

"No, Uncle Fabian; it is not to be sold. And I am glad you reminded me of it. I have intended all along to give it to our minister's wife. She has no carriage of any sort, and she really needs one, and she will enjoy this because she can drive the pony herself. So, after I have gone, will you please send it to Mrs. Melville, with my love?"

"Certainly, my dear, with the greatest pleasure. Cora, that is well thought of. Now I must go up to the nursery and bid good-by to baby, or her mother would never forgive me."

And high and heavy Mr. Fabian tripped up the stairs like a lamplighter.

Corona lingered in the hall, talking with Mr. Clarence, who had now come there to put on his overcoat. Presently Mr. Fabian came hurrying downstairs alone. He had left Violet in the sanctuary.

"Come, come, Clarence, hurry up! We are late! What if the monarch should reach the works before

us? I shouldn't like to meet him in his roused wrath! Should you?

"Old age ne'er cooled the Douglass blood!"

said Mr. Fabian, hurriedly pulling on his overcoat, seizing hat and gloves, and with a hasty—

"Good-by, Cora, until to-night," hurried out of the front door.

He need not have been in such haste—the Iron King was not destined to reach North End in advance of his sons that morning.

Mr. Clarence kissed Corona good-by, and hurried after his elder brother, and then stopped short at what he saw.

Mr. Fabian was standing before the carriage door with one foot on the step.

Beside him was a horseman who had just ridden up—the horse in a lather of foam, the man breathless and dazed—telling some news in broken sentences; Mr. Fabian listening pallid and aghast.

"Great Heaven! how sudden! how shocking!" he exclaimed at last, turning back toward the house, and hurrying up the steps.

"What is it? What is the matter? What has happened, Fabian?" anxiously demanded Clarence.

"The father has had a stroke! No time for particulars now! Take the fastest horse in the stable and go yourself to North End to fetch the doctor. You can

bring him sooner than any servant. I must go directly on to Rockhold. Cora must delay her journey again. Be off, Clarence!" said Mr. Fabian.

And while the elder brother returned to the house, the younger went to get his horse.

"Cora!' called Mr. Fabian.

Corona came out of the parlor.

"You cannot go away to-day."

"Why?" inquired the young lady.

"Don't talk! Listen! Your grandfather is ill—very ill. Old John has just come from Rockhold to tell me."

"Oh! I am very sorry."

"No time for words! Go put on your bonnet, and come along with me; the carriage that was to have taken me to North End must take us both to Rockhold. Hurry, Cora."

"But Violet?"

"I will go and tell Violet that the grandfather is not feeling very well, and has sent for you. I can do this while you are getting ready to go. Then come into the nursery and bid Violet good-by."

Corona hurried up to her room, and quickly put on her bonnet and fur-lined cloak, and then ran into the nursery, where she found Violet nursing her baby, looking serious but composed, and evidently unconscious of old Aaron Rockharrt's danger. Mr. Fabian was standing at the back of her chair, so that she might not read the truth in his face.

"So you are going home so suddenly, Cora, dear? I

am so sorry the father is not feeling well that I cannot even ask you to stay here a moment longer. Give my love to the father, and tell him if he does not get better in a day or two I shall be sure to come and nurse him."

She could not rise without disturbing her precious baby, but she raised her head and put up her lips, that Cora might kiss her good-by. Then Cora followed her uncle downstairs, and in five minutes more they were seated in the carriage, slowly winding their way down the dangerous mountain pass to the river road that led to Rockhold.

"Uncle Fabian," said Corona, gravely, "I have been trying to think what is right for me to do. This sorrowful news took me so completely by surprise, and your directions were so prompt and peremptory, that I had not a moment for reflection; so that I followed your lead automatically. But now, Uncle Fabian, I have considered, and I ask you as I have asked myself—am I right in going back to Rockhold, after my grandfather has sent me away, and forbidden me ever to return? Tell me, Uncle Fabian."

"My dear, what do you yourself wish to do?" he inquired.

"To return to Rockhold and nurse my grandfather, if he will allow me to do so."

"Then by all means do so."

"But, Uncle Fabian—against my grandfather's express command?"

"Good Heaven, girl! Those 'commands' were issued

by a well and angry man. You are returning to minister to an ill and perhaps a dying one."

"Still, Uncle Fabian, would it not seem to be taking advantage of my grandfather's helpless state to return now, after he had forbidden me to enter his house? I think it would. And the more I reflect upon the subject, the surer I feel that I ought not to enter Rockhold unbidden. And—I will not."

"You will not! What! Can you show resentment to your stricken—it may be dying—grandfather?"

"Heaven forbid! But I must not disobey his injunction, now that he is too helpless to prevent me. No, Uncle Fabian, I must not enter the house. But neither will I be far from it. I will remain within call."

"Where?"

"At the ferryman's cottage. Will you, Uncle Fabian, as soon as you have an opportunity, say that I am deeply grieved for all that has estranged us? Will you ask him to forgive me and let me come to him?"

"Yes; I will do so, my dear, if there is an opportunity. But, Cora, I think you are morbidly scrupulous. I think that you should come to the house. He may wish to see you if he should have a lucid interval, and there may not be time to send for you."

"I must risk that rather than disobey him in his extremity."

"As you will," replied Mr. Fabian. And no more was said on the subject.

When they reached the foot of the mountain and the

level of the river road, the horses were put upon their speed, and they soon arrived at Rockhold.

"I will wait in the carriage, until you go in and inquire how he is," said Corona, as the vehicle drew up before the front door.

Mr. Fabian got out and hurried up the steps. The door stood open, cold as the day was, and all things wore the neglected aspect of a dwelling wherein the master lay stricken unto death. The housekeeper, Martha, was coming down the stairs and crying.

"How is your master?" breathlessly inquired Mr. Fabian.

"Oh, Marse Fabe, sir, jes' livin' an' dat's all!" sobbed the woman. "Dunno nuffin. Layin' dere jes' like a dead corpe, 'cept for breavin' hard," wept the woman.

"Who is with him?"

"Me mos' times an' young Mark. I jes' come down to speak 'long o' you, Marse Fabe, w'en I see de carriage dribe up."

"Well, go back to your master. I will speak to my niece, and then come in," said Mr. Fabian, as he hurried out to the carriage. All his interview with the housekeeper had not occupied two minutes, but Cora was pale with suspense and anxiety.

"How is he?" she panted.

"Unconscious, my poor girl. Oh, Cora! come in!"

"No, no; I must not. Not until he permits me. I will stop at the ferryman's cottage. Oh, if he should re-

cover consciousness—oh, Uncle Fabian, ask him to let me come to him, and send me word."

"Yes, yes; I will do it. I must go to him now. Charles," he said, turning to the coachman, "drive Mrs. Rothsay down to the ferry house, and then take the carriage to the stables."

And then, with a grave nod to Corona, Mr. Fabian re-entered the house. The coachman drove the carriage down to the ferryman's cottage and drew up. The door was open and the cottage was empty.

"Boat on t'other side, ma'am," said Charles.

"For the doctor, I suppose—and hope," said Corona, looking across the river, and seeing a gig with two men coming on to the ferryboat.

She watched from the door of the ferryman's cottage while Charles drove off the empty carriage toward the stables and the two ferrymen poled their boat across the river. She retreated within the house before the boat touched the land, for she knew that the doctor, if he should see her there, would wonder why she was not at her grandfather's bedside, and perhaps—as he was an old friend—he might ask questions which she would find it embarrassing to answer. The boat touched the shore; the gig, containing the doctor and Mr. Clarence, rolled off the boat on along the drive leading to the house.

Meanwhile Mr. Fabian had re-entered the hall and hurried up to his father's room. He found the Iron

King in bed, lying on his right side and breathing heavily. His eyes were half closed.

"Father," said the son, in a low voice, taking his hand and bending over him.

There was no response.

"It ain't no use, Marster Fabe. Yer can't rouse him, do wot yer will. Better wait till de doctor come, young marse. I done been tried all I knowed how, but it wa'n't no use," said Martha, who stood on the other side of the bed watching her insensible master.

"Tell me when this happened. Come away to the upper end of the room and tell me about it."

"Might's well tell yer right here, marse. 'Twon't sturve him. Lor! thunder wouldn't sturve him, the way he is in."

"Then tell me, how was it? When was he stricken?"

"We don't know, marse. He was found jes' dis way by John dis mornin'—not jes' zackly dis way, howaseber, case he was a-layin' on his lef' side, w'ich was berry bad; so me an' John turn him ober jes' so like he is a-layin' now. Den we sent right off for you, marse, to ketch yer at home 'fore yer went to de works."

"Did he seem well when he came home last night?"

"Jes' 'bout as ujual, marse. He came in, an' John he waited on him. An' he ax, ole marse did, 'was Mrs. Rossay gone?' W'ich John tole him she were. Den he ordered dinner to be fotch up. An' John he had a pitcher ob hot punch ready. An' ole marse drank some. Den he went in to dinner all by hisself. An' young

Mark he waited on de table, w'ich he tell me, w'en I ax him dis mornin', how de ole marse eat much as ujual, wid a good relish. Den arter dinner he went to de liberairy and sot dere a long time. Ole John say it were midnight 'fo' de ole marse walk upstairs an' call him to wait on him."

"Was John the last one who saw my father before he was found unconscious this morning?"

"Hi! yes, young marse, to be sure he were. De las' to see de ole marse in healt' las' night, an' de firs' to fine him dis way dis mornin'."

"How came he to find his master in this condition?"

"It was dis way. Yer know, young marse, as dere is two keys to ole marser's do', w'ich ole marse keeps one in his room to lock hisse'f in, an' John keeps one to let hisse'f in w'en de ole marse rings for him in de mornin'."

"Yes, I know."

"Well, dis mornin' de ole marse didn't ring at his ujual hour. An' de time passed, an' de breakfast were ready an' spilin'. So I tole John how he better go up an' see if ole marse was well, how maybe he didn't feel like gettin' up an' might want to take his breakfas' in bed. But Lor! I nebber participated sich a sarious 'tack as dis. Well, den, John he went an' rapped soft like. But he didn' get no answer. Den he rap little louder. But still no answer. Den John he got scared, awful scared. Las' John he plucks up courage, an' unlocks de do', slow an' saf', an' goes in on tiptoe to de bedside, an'—an'—an'—dis yer is wot he seen. He

t'ought his ole marse were dead sure, an' he come howlin' an' tumblin' down to me, an' tole me so, an' I called young Mark to follow me, case ole John wa'n't no good, an' I run up yere, an'—an'—an' dis yer is wot I foun'! O'ly he were a-layin' on his lef' side, an' I see he were breavin' an' I turn him ober on his right, an' did all I could for him, an' sent John arter you."

"I wish the doctor would come," said Mr. Fabian, anxiously, as he took his father's hand again and tried to feel the pulse.

The door opened very quietly, and Clarence came into the room. Fabian beckoned him to approach the bed.

"How is he?" inquired the younger man.

"As you see! He was found in this condition by his servant this morning. He has shown no sign of consciousness since," replied the elder.

"The doctor is below. Shall he come up now?"

"Certainly."

Clarence left the room and soon returned with the physician. After a very brief examination of pulse, temperature, the pupils of the eyes of the patient, prompt measures were taken to relieve the evident pressure on the brain. The doctor bled the sufferer, who presently opened his eyes, and looked slowly around his bed. His two sons bent over him.

He tried to speak.

They bent lower still to listen.

After several futile efforts he uttered one word:

"Cora."

"Yes, father—she is here. Go, Clarence, and fetch her at once. She is at the ferryman's cottage."

The last sentence was added in a low whisper. Clarence immediately left the room to do his errand. Fifteen minutes later the door opened softly, and Clarence reentered the room with Cora.

Mr. Fabian went to meet her, saying softly:

"He has called for you, my dear! The only word he has spoken since he recovered consciousness was your name."

"So Uncle Clarence told me," she said, in a broken voice.

"Come to him now," said Fabian, leading her to the bedside.

She sank on her knees and took the hand of the dying man and kissed it, pleading:

"Grandfather, dear grandfather, I love you. I am grieved at having offended you. Will you forgive me —now?"

He made several painful efforts to answer her, before he uttered the few disconnected words:

"Yes—forgive—you—Cora."

She bathed his hand with her tears. All on her part also was forgotten now—all the harshness and despotism of years were forgotten now, and nothing was remembered but the gray-haired man, always gray-haired in her knowledge of him, who had protected her orphanage and given her a home and an education. She knelt

there, holding his hand, and was presently touched and comforted besause the fingers of that hand closed on hers with a loving pressure that they had never given her in all her life before. That was the last sign of consciousness he gave for many hours.

Mr. Fabian took the doctor aside.

"Ought I to send for my wife?" he inquired.

"Yes; I think so," replied the physician.

And the son knew that answer was his father's sentence of death. Not one of the family could be spared from this death bed to go and fetch Violet. So Mr. Fabian went downstairs to the library and wrote a hasty note.

DEAR VIOLET: You offered to come and help to nurse the father, who is sicker than we thought, but with no contagious fever. Come now, dear, and bring baby and nurse, for you may have to stay several days.

FABIAN.

He inclosed this letter in an envelope, sealed and directed it, and took it down to the stable, where he found his own groom, Charles, in the coachman's room.

"Put the horses to the carriage again, and return to Violet Banks to bring your mistress here. Give her this note. It will explain all," said Mr. Fabian, handing the note to the servant.

He found the same group around the death bed. Clarence and the doctor standing on the left side, Cora

kneeling by the right side, still holding the hand of the dying man, whose fingers were closed upon hers and whose face was turned toward hers, but with "no speculation" in it. Two hours passed away without any change. The sound of wheels without could be heard through the profound stillness of the death chamber. Mr. Fabian again left the room to receive his wife.

He met Violet in the hall, just as old John had admitted her. She was closely followed by the nurse and the child.

"How is father?" she inquired.

"He is very ill, my dear, but resting quietly just at present. Here is Martha; she will take you to your room and make you and the baby comfortable. Then, as soon as you can, come to the father's chamber; you know where to find it," said Mr. Fabian, who feared to shock his sensitive wife by telling her that he was sinking fast, and thought that it would be safer to let her come into the room and join the group around the bed, and gradually learn the sad truth by her own observation.

"Yes; I can find my way very well," answered Violet, as she handed her bag, shawl, and umbrella to Martha and followed the housekeeper upstairs, with the nurse and baby.

Mr. Fabian returned to the chamber of the dying man, around whose bed the group remained as he had left it, and where in a very few minutes he was joined by Violet. She entered the room very softly, so that her

approach was not heard until she reached the bedside. Then she took and silently pressed the hands that were silently held out by Cora, and finally she knelt down beside her.

More hours passed; no one left the sick room, for no one knew how soon the end might come. Old John thoughtfully brought in a waiter of refreshments and set it down on a side table for any one who might require it.

Day declined. Through the front windows of the death room the western sky could be seen, dark, lowering, and stormy. A long range of heavy clouds lay massed above the horizon, obscuring the light of the sinking sun, but leaving a narrow line of clear sky just along the top of the western ridge.

Presently a singularly beautiful effect was produced. The sun, sinking below the dark cloud into the clear gold line of sky, sent forth a blaze of light from the mountain heights, across the river, and into the chamber of death! Was it this sudden illumination that kindled the fire of life in the dying man into a last expiring flame, or was it indeed the presence of a spiritual visitant, visible only to the vanishing spirit? Who can tell?

Suddenly old Aaron Rockharrt opened his eyes—those great, strong black eyes that had ever been a terror to the evil doer—and the well doer also—and stared before him, held up his hands and exclaimed:

"Deborah! Deborah!"

And then he dropped his arms by his side, and with a long, deep-drawn sigh fell asleep. The name of his old wife was the last word upon his dying lips.

No one but the doctor knew what had happened. He bent over the lifeless shell, gazed on the face, felt the pulse, felt the heart, and then stood up and said:

"All is over, my dear friends. His passage has been quite painless. I never saw an easier death."

And he drew up the sheet over the face of the dead.

Although all day they had hourly expected this end, yet now they could not quite believe that it had indeed come.

The huge, strong man, the rugged Iron King—dead? He who, if not as indestructible as he seemed, was at least constituted of that stern stuff of which centenarians are made, and whom all expected should live far up into the eighties or nineties—dead? The father who had lived over them like some mighty governing and protecting power all their lives, necessary, inevitable, inseparable from their lives—dead?

"Come, my dear," said Mr. Clarence, gently raising Corona and leading her away. "You have this to console you: he died reconciled to you, holding your hand in his to the last."

"Ah, dear Uncle Clarence, you have much more to console you, for you never failed even once in your duty to him, and never gave him one moment of uneasiness in all your life," replied Corona, as she left him in front of her old room.

She entered and shut the door and gave way to the natural grief that overwhelmed her for a time.

When she was sufficiently composed she sat down and wrote to her brother, informing him of what had occurred, and telling him that she still held her purpose of going out to him with the Nevilles.

CHAPTER XVI

"SIC TRANSIT GLORIA MUNDI"

If old Aaron Rockharrt, the Iron King, had never been generally loved, he was certainly very highly respected by the whole community. The news of his sudden death fell like a shock upon the public. Preparations for the obsequies were on the grandest scale.

They occupied two days. On the first day there were funeral services at Rockhold, performed by the Rev. Luke Melville, pastor of the North End Mission Church, and attended by all the neighboring families, as well as by all the operatives of the works. After these were over, the whole assembly, many in carriages and many more on foot, followed the hearse that carried the remains to the North End railway depot, where the coffin was placed in a special car prepared for its reception, and, attended by the whole family, it was conveyed to the State capital and deposited in the long drawing room of the Rockharrt mansion, where it remained until the next day. On the second day funeral services were held at the town house by the bishop of the diocese, assisted by the rector of the Church of the Lord's Peace, and attended by a host of the city friends of the family.

After these services the long funeral procession moved from the house to the cemetery of the Lord's Peace, where the body was laid in the Rockharrt vault beside that of his old wife.

On the return of the family to the house they assembled in the library to hear the reading of the will of Aaron Rockharrt, which had been brought in by his solicitor, Mr. Benjamin Norris.

There were present, seated around the table, Fabian, Violet, and Clarence Rockharrt, Cora Rothsay, the doctor and the lawyer. Standing behind these were gathered the servants of the family.

Mr. Norris blew his nose, cleared his throat, put on his spectacles, opened the will and proceeded to read it.

The testament may be briefly summed up as follows:

First there were handsome legacies left to each of the old servants. One full half of the testator's vast estate was left to his elder son, Fabian; one quarter to his younger son, Clarence; and one quarter to be divided equally between his grandson, Sylvan Haught, and his granddaughter, Corona Rothsay.

Fabian was appointed sole executor.

The lawyer folded up the document and handed it to Fabian Rockharrt.

"Clarence, old boy, I hardly think this is altogether fair to you," said Fabian, good-naturedly, and ready to deceive him into the delusion that he had not schemed for this unequal division of the enormous wealth.

"It is all right, Fabian. Altogether right. You are

the eldest son, and now the head of the firm, and you have ten times over the business brains that I have. I am perfectly satisfied, and even if I were not, I would not dream of criticising my father's will," replied Clarence with perfect good humor and sincerity.

The legacies were promptly paid by Fabian Rockharrt. Mr. Clarence decided to remain as his brother's junior partner in the firm that was henceforth to be known as "Aaron Rockharrt's Sons," and to leave all his share of the money invested in the works.

When Corona was asked when and how she would receive her own, she also declared that she would leave it for the present where it was, invested in the works, and the firm might pay her legal interest for its use, or make her a small silent partner in the business. Sylvan had yet to be consulted in regard to the disposal of his capital.

The month of October was in its third week. It was high time for Corona to go to Washington and make the acquaintance of the Nevilles, if she wished to go to travel west under their protection. She had several times spoken of this purpose in the presence of Violet, so as to accustom that emotional young woman to the idea of their separation. But Violet, absorbed in her grief for the dead, paid but little attention to Corona's casual remarks.

At the end of a few days Fabian Rockharrt began to talk about going back to Violet Banks, and invited

Corona to accompany his wife and himself to their pleasant country home.

It was then that Corona spoke decisively. She thanked him for his invitation and reminded him of her unalterable resolution to go out to Fort Farthermost to join her brother.

When Fabian Rockharrt tried to combat her determination, she informed him that she had during the funeral week received a joint letter from Captain and Mrs. Neville, inviting her to join their party to the frontier. This letter had been written at the suggestion of the colonel of Captain Neville's regiment, and had not been mentioned or even answered until after the funeral. She said that she had accepted this kind invitation, and had forwarded all her baggage, which had been so long stored at North End, to Washington to wait her arrival in that city.

"Very well, then," said Fabian. "If you are set upon this expedition, I cannot hinder you, and shall not try to do so. But I tell you what I will do. I will take Violet to Washington with you, and get rooms at some pleasant house before the rush of winter visitors. We shall not be able to go into general society, but there is a great plenty of sight-seeing in the national capital with which to divert the mind of my poor little girl. Her old guardians, the Pendletimes, are there also, and it will comfort her to see them. With them she will be able to let you depart without breaking her poor little heart."

"Oh, Uncle Fabian, I am so glad you have thought of this! It will be so good for Violet. She has had a sad time since her home-coming. She needs a change," said Corona, eagerly.

"I think she will be very much pleased with the plan. Now, Cora, when do you wish to go?"

"As soon as possible; but since you are so kind as to accompany me, my wish must wait ou yours, Uncle Fabian."

"Let us go and consult Violet," said Fabian Rockharrt, rising and leading the way to the nursery, which had been hastily fitted up for the accommodation of the Rockharrt baby and her nurse, and where he felt sure of finding the young mother, too.

Violet, when told of the scheme to go immediately to Washington and see her old friends, was more than "pleased"; she was delighted. To show her baby to her more than mother, as she often called Mrs. Pendletime, would fill her soul with pride and joy.

Very early the next morning Mr. Fabian and his party left the city by the express train en route for the national capital, leaving Mr. Clarence to go to North End and take charge of the works. They reached Baltimore at 11 P. M. and remained over night. The next day they went on to Washington, where they arrived about noon, and went directly to the hotel where Captain and Mrs. Neville were staying.

Violet, very much fatigued, lay down to rest and to get her baby to sleep at her bosom. Mr. Fabian, as we

must continue from habit to call him, though his rightful style was now Mr. Rockharrt, went down to the reading room to send his own and his wife's cards to Chief Justice and Mrs. Pendletime, and to collect Washington gossip.

Corona changed her traveling dress, went down into the ladies' parlor, and sent her card to the rooms of the Nevilles. And presently there entered to her a very handsome middle-aged pair.

The captain was a fine, tall, broad-shouldered, soldierly-looking man, with a bald head and a gray mustache. He was clothed in a citizen's morning suit. The captain's wife was also rather tall, slender, dark complexioned, with a thin face, black eyes, and black hair very slightly touched with gray, which she wore in ringlets over her ears, and in a braid behind her neck. Her dress was a plain, dark cashmere, with white cuffs and collar.

"It is very kind of you to take charge of me," said Corona to Mrs. Neville, as the three seated themselves on a group of chairs near together.

"My dear, I am very glad to have your company, as well on the long and dreary journey over the plains as at that distant frontier fort. You will find life at the fort with your brother a severe test to your affection for him," said Mrs. Neville, with her rather doubtful smile.

"You have some experience of life at Fort Farthermost?" remarked Corona pleasantly.

"No; not at that particular fort. We have never been

quite so far as that yet. It is a new fort—an outpost really on the extreme southwestern frontier, as I understand. We shall have to cross what used to be called the Great American Desert to reach it. We go first to Leavenworth, and, of course, the journey to Leavenworth is easy enough. But from Leavenworth the long, tedious traveling by army wagons over the plains and through the wilderness to the southwestern forts will try your endurance, my dear."

"Come, come," said the captain, heartily. "It is not all unmitigated dreadfulness. To be sure we have no railroads through the wilderness, no fine city hotels to stay at; but, then, there are some few forts along the line of travel, where we can stop a day or two to rest, and have good sport. And when we have no fort at the end of a day's journey, it is not very awful to bivouac under the shelter of some friendly rock or in the thicket of some forest. The wagons by day make good couches by night; and as for the bill of fare, a haunch of venison from a deer shot by some soldier on the road, and cooked on a fire in the open air, has a very particularly fine flavor. All civilized condiments we carry with us. As for amusements, though we have no theaters or concerts, yet there is always sure to be some fellow along who can sing a good song, and some other fellow who can tell a good story. I rather think you will enjoy the trip as a novelty, Mrs. Rothsay. I observe that most young people do."

"I really think I shall enjoy it," assented Corona.

"I hope that you will be able to endure it, my dear," added Mrs. Neville.

"You see the journey is no novelty to my wife, Mrs. Rothsay. She has spent all her married life on the frontier. Thirty years ago, my dear lady, I received my first commission as second lieutenant in the Third Infantry, and was ordered to Okononak, Oregon. I married my sweetheart here, and took her with me, and she has been with me ever since; for we both agreed that anything was better than separation. We have raised children, and they have married and left us, and we have never been parted for a week. We have lived on the frontier, and know every fort from the confines of Canada to those of Mexico. We have lived among soldiers, savages, pioneers, scouts, border ruffians, wild beasts, and venomous reptiles all the days of our married life. What do you think of us?"

"I think it is unjust that some miltary officers have to vegetate all their days in those wilds of the West, while others live for all that life is worth in the Eastern centers of civilization."

"Bless you, my dear, we don't vegetate. If nothing else should rouse our souls the Indians would, and make it lively for us, too! It is not an unpleasant life, upon the whole, Mrs. Rothsay; but you see we are growing old, and my wife is tired of it, that is all."

"How soon shall we leave for the West?" inquired Corona.

"How soon can you be ready, my dear young lady?"

"I am quite ready now."

"Then on Monday, I think. What do you say, Mrs. Neville?" inquired the captain.

"Monday will do," replied the wife.

"Now here are some people coming in to interrupt us," said the captain in a vexed tone.

Corona looked up and said:

"They are Chief Justice and Mrs. Pendletime, come to call on their late ward, Mrs. Fabian Rockharrt. You know them?"

"Not a bit of it. So if you please, my dear, we will retire at once and leave you to receive them, especially as we are both engaged to dine at the arsenal this afternoon," said the captain; and he arose, and with his wife withdrew from the parlor.

Cora went forward to receive the new visitors. They both greeted her very warmly, and then expressed the deepest sympathy with her in her sorrow at the loss of her grandfather, and made many inquiries for the particulars of his illness.

When Corona had answered all their questions, and they had again expressed their sympathy, she inquired:

"Have you sent for Violet? Does she know you are here? If not, I will go and call her."

"Oh, yes; the servant took up our card. And here she comes! And the baby in her arms, by all that is beautiful!" said Mrs. Pendletime, as she arose to meet her favorite, and took the infant from the fond mother and covered both with caresses.

"To think of my child coming to a hotel instead of directly to my house!" said the elder lady, reproachfully.

"But I wished to stay a day or two with Corona before she leaves for the West. And after I meant to go to you and stay as long as you would let me," Violet replied.

"Mrs. Rothsay going West!" exclaimed the old lady.

"Yes; she is," said Violet, emphatically and impatiently. And then there ensued more explanations, and exclamations, and remonstrances.

And finally Mrs. Pendletime inquired:

"And when do you leave on this fearful expedition, my dear?"

"On Monday next I go, with Captain and Mrs. Neville," replied Corona.

"Well, I am truly sorry for it; but, of course, I cannot help it. On Monday, therefore, after your friend has taken leave of you, you will remove to my house, Violet?"

"Oh, yes; the thought of going to you is the only comfort I have in parting from Corona," replied Mrs. Fabian Rockharrt.

CHAPTER XVII

CORONA'S DEPARTURE

On the Sunday following her arrival in Washington, the last day of her sojourn in the capital, the day before her departure for the frontier, Corona Rothsay rose early in the morning, and soon as she was dressed went down to the ladies' parlor. Neither her uncle nor his young wife had yet left their rooms. In fact, so early was it that none of the ladies staying in the house had yet come down to the parlor. The place was vacant.

Corona went up the long room and sat down by one of the front windows, to look down on the passing life of the avenue below.

While she sat looking out of the window she heard a movement at the lower end of the room. Some one entered and sat down to wait. And some one else went out again. Corona never turned round to see who was there. She continued to look through the window. She was not interested in the comers and goers into and out of the hotel.

Presently some one came in again and said:

"Mrs. Rothsay is not in her room, sir."

"Then I will wait here until she can be found," replied the newcomer in a familiar voice.

But then Corona started up and rushed down the length of the room, crying eagerly:

"Uncle Clarence! Oh, Uncle Clarence! Is this you? Is this indeed you? I am so glad to see you once more before I go! I had thought never to see you again! Or, at least, not for many years! And here you are!"

He caught the hands she held out as she reached him, drew her to his bosom and kissed her as he answered:

"Yes, my dear, it is I, your old bachelor uncle, who was not satisfied with the leave-taking on last Thursday, but longed to see you again before your departure."

"You dear Uncle Clarence!"

"So yesterday afternoon I telegraphed to Fabian to ask him when you were to start for the West. He telegraphed back that you expected to leave Washington on Monday morning. I got this answer about five o'clock in the afternoon. And, as it was Saturday night and I had a clear day, the blessed Sabbath, before me, I only waited to close the works at six o'clock, as usual, and then I hurried away, packet a carpet bag and caught, by half a minute, the six-thirty express for Baltimore and Washington, and came straight through! It was a twelve hours' journey, my dear, without stopping except to change cars, which connected promptly, and so you see I have lost no time! I have just arrived, and did not have to wait five minutes even to see you, for you were here to receive me! And now that I am here, my dear, I shall stay to see you off with the Nevilles.

You go to-morrow, as I understand? There has been no change in the programme?"

"We go to-morrow, Uncle Clarence," replied Corona, in a grave, sorrowful tone, for she was sympathizing with him.

"By what train, my child?"

"The eight-thirty express, Baltimore and Ohio Railroad."

"Then I need not part with you here in Washington. Our routes are the same for some hundred miles. I shall travel with you as far as the North End Junction, and take leave of you there. That will be seeing the very last of you, up to the very last minute."

Just at that moment Mr. Fabian entered the parlor, and recognizing his younger brother and junior partner, approached him with a shout:

"Clarence! by all that's magical! Pray, did you rise from the earth, or fall from the skies, that I find you here?"

"How do you do, Fabian? I came in the most commonplace way you can imagine—by the night express train—and have only just now arrived," replied Mr. Clarence.

"And how goes on the works?" inquired Fabian Rockharrt.

"Admirably."

"Glad to hear it. And what brought you here, if it is a civil question?"

"It isn't a civil question, but I'll answer it all the

same. I came to see Cora once more, to spend the last Sabbath with her and to accompany her as far on the journey to-morrow as our way runs together, which will be as far as the North End Junction."

"And you will not reach North End before Monday night! A whole day lost at the works, Clarence! Ah! it is well you have me to deal with instead of the father —Heaven rest his soul!"

"See here, Fabian," said Mr. Clarence, "for a very little more I will go with Cora all the way to Fort Farthermost, as her natural protector and helper in her missionary work. What, indeed, have I to keep me here in the East since the father left us? Nothing whatever. You have your wife and child; I have no one. Cora is nearer to me than any other being."

"Come! Come down to breakfast. You have been traveling all night without food, I feel sure; and fasting and vigils never were means of grace to a Rockharrt. Come!" said Mr. Fabian, with a laugh.

"I must get a room and go to it first. Look at me!" said Clarence.

"You do look like the ash man or blacksmith, certainly. Well, come along; we'll go to the office and get a room, and then you can get some of that dust off you. It won't take ten minutes. After that we will go to breakfast."

The brothers left the parlor together.

The next moment Violet entered it, and bade good-

morning to Corona, who in turn told her of the new arrival.

"Clarence! Oh, I am so glad! What an addition he will be to our party, Cora, especially after you have left us, my dear, when we shall miss you so sadly," said Violet.

Cora made no reply. She disliked to tell Violet that she, Violet, would lose the society of Clarence at the same time that she would lose that of herself, as her uncle was to leave Washington by the same train.

While they were still talking the two brothers reentered the parlor.

When Fabian demanded whether they were ready to go down to breakfast, and received a satisfactory answer, he drew the arm of his wife within his own, and led the way downstairs. Clarence and Corona followed. When they entered the breakfast saloon, the polite waiter came forward and ushered them to a table at which Captain and Mrs. Neville were already seated. Morning greetings were exchanged, and Mr. Clarence was introduced and welcomed.

After breakfast all the party went to church.

Then Clarence and Corona spent the afternoon together at one end of the long parlor, which was so long and had so many recesses that half a dozen separate groups might have isolated themselves there, each without fear of their conversation being overheard by the others.

All the members of our party sat up late that evening

to eke out the time they might spend together before parting. It was after midnight when they retired.

The travelers met at an early breakfast the next morning. Their baggage had been sent on and checked in advance. They had nothing to do but make the most of the few remaining minutes.

When the meal was over they all hastily left the table and went to their rooms to put on their traveling wraps.

Fabian and Violet were to accompany the travelers to the railway depot to see them off, so that there was to be no leave-taking at the hotel except of the baby.

Corona went into the nurse's room, took the mite in her arms, held it to her bosom, caressed and kissed it tenderly, but dropped no tear on its sweet. fair face or soft white robe.

The baby received all this love with delight, leaping and dancing in Corona's arms, then gazing at her with intense eyes, and crowing and prattling in inarticulate and unintelligible language, of some happy, incommunicable news, some joyful message it would deliver if it could.

"Come, Cora. We are waiting for you, my dear," sounded the voice of Mr. Fabian in the hall outside.

Corona kissed the baby for the last time, blessed it for the vague sweet hope it had infused into her heart, and then laid it in its nurse's arms and left the room.

"We shall barely catch the train, if we catch it at all. And the captain is as nearly in a 'stew' as an officer

and a gentleman permits himself to get. We have been looking for you everywhere," said Mr. Fabian.

"I was in the nurse's room, bidding good-by to the baby," replied Cora.

"Oh!"

No more was said. Baby was excuse for any amount of delay, even though it had caused the missing of their train and the driving of the captain into a war dance.

They hurried downstairs and entered the carriages that were waiting to take them to the depot—Fabian, Violet, Clarence and Corona in one; Captain and Mrs. Neville, and Mrs. Neville's maid, in the other. And so they drove to the depot, and arrived just in time to take their tickets and rush to their seats on the train, with no further leave-taking than a kiss all around, and a general, heartfelt "God bless you!"

The train was speeding away, leaving Washington City behind, when our party first began to realize that they were really "off" and to take in their surroundings.

Captain and Mrs. Neville sat together about midway in the car. Clarence and Corona sat immediately behind them. On the opposite side sat Mrs. Neville's colored maid, Manda, and in the rear corner, on the same side, the captain's orderly—a new recruit. About half the remaining seats in the car were occupied by other travelers.

At Harper's Ferry, amid the most beautiful and sublime mountain scenery of Virginia, the train stopped

twenty minutes for dinner, which, in those ante-bellum days, was well served from the hotel at the depot. After dinner, the train started off again at express speed, stopping but at few stations, until near night, when it reached North End Junction, where Mr. Clarence was to get off.

"Cora, my darling, we must part here," said Mr. Clarence, gathering up his effects, as the train slackened speed.

"Oh, Uncle Clarence! Dear Uncle Clarence! God bless you! God bless you!" sobbed Corona.

"Keep up your heart, dear one. You may see me sooner than you dream of. The missionary mania is sometimes contagious. You have it in its most pronounced form. And I have been sitting by you for eight hours," repled Mr. Clarence, forgetting his prudent resolution to say nothing to Corona of an incipient plan in his mind.

"What do you mean, dear Uncle Clarence?" she anxiously inquired.

"I hardly know myself, Corona. But ponder my words in your heart, dear one. They may mean something. Here we are! Good-by! Good-by! God bless you!" exclaimed Mr. Clarence.

"Good-by! God bless you!" cried Corona, and they parted—Clarence jumping off the train just as it started again, at the imminent risk of his life, yet with lucky immunity from harm.

Corona, looking through the side window, saw him standing safely on the platform waiting a North End train to come up—saw him only for an instant as her train flashed onward, and "pondered his words in her heart," and wondered what they meant.

CHAPTER XVIII

ON THE FRONTIER

TRAVELING in the ante-bellum days, even by steamboats and railway trains, was not the rapid transit of the present time. It took one day for our travelers to reach Wheeling. There they embarked on a river steamer for St. Louis. On Monday morning they took a steamboat for Leavenworth, where they arrived early in the evening.

This was the first and best part of their long journey. The second part must of necessity be very different. Here their railway and steamboat travel ceased, and the remainder of their course to the far southwestern frontier must be by military wagons through an almost untrodden wilderness.

I know that since the days of which I write this section of the country has been wonderfully developed, and the wilderness has been made to "bloom and blossom as the rose," but in those days it was still laid down on the maps as "The Great American Desert." And Fort Leavenworth appeared to us as an extreme outpost of civilization in the West, and a stopping place and a point of new departure for troops en route for the southwestern frontier forts.

Captain Neville and his party landed at Leavenworth on the afternoon of a fine November day. The captain led the way to the colonel's quarters. A sentinel was walking up and down the front. He saluted the captain, who passed into the quarters, where an orderly received the party, showed them into a parlor, gave them seats, and then took the captain's card to the colonel.

In a few moments Col. —— entered the parlor, looked around, recognized Captain Neville, and greeted him with:

"Ah, Neville! delighted to see you! Mrs. Neville, of course! I remember you well, madam! And this young lady your daughter, I presume?" he added, turning from the elders to shake hands with Corona.

"No; not our daughter. I wish she were; but our young friend, Mrs. Rothsay, who is going with us to Farthermost," Captain Neville explained.

"To join her husband! One of the new set of officers turned out by the Academy! Happy man!" exclaimed the colonel, warmly shaking Corona's hand.

"No, sir; Mrs. Rothsay is a widow. She goes out to join her only brother, Lieutenant Haught!" the captain again explained, in a low and faintly reproachful tone.

"Oh! ah! I beg pardon, I am sure. The mistake was absurd," said the colonel, with a penitent air.

"When did you leave Washington?"

"A week ago to-day; but the boats were slow."

"Pleasant journey, I hope?"

"Oh, yes; so far."

At this moment the colonel's wife came into the room. She was a tall, gray-haired woman with a fair complexion and blue eyes, and dressed in black silk and a lace cap. She shook hands with Captain and Mrs. Neville, who were old friends, and who then presented Mrs. Rothsay, whom the hostess received with much cordiality.

Meanwhile the colonel and the captain strolled out upon the piazza to smoke each a cigar. The former inquired more particularly into the history of the beautiful, pale woman who had come out under the protection of the captain and his wife.

Captain Neville told him all he knew of Mrs. Rothsay's story—namely, that she was the granddaughter of the famous Iron King, Aaron Rockharrt, lately deceased, and that she was the widow of the late Regulas Rothsay, who so mysteriously disappeared on the evening of his wedding before the day of his expected inauguration as governor of his native State, and who was afterward discovered to have been murdered by the Comanche Indians.

In the evening, when a number of officers dropped into the drawing room of the colonel's quarters, our party were quite able to receive them.

One unexpected thing happened. Among the callers was a certain Major ——, a childless widower of middle age, short, thick-set, black-bearded and red-faced, with a bluff presence and a bluff voice, who fell—yes,

tumbled—heels over head in love with Corona at first sight.

This catastrophe was so patent to all beholders as to excite equal wonder and mirthfulness.

Only Corona of all the company remained ignorant of the conquest she had made; ignorant, that is, until the visitors had all left the quarters, when her hostess said to her in a bantering tone:

"You have subdued our major, my dear, utterly subdued him. This is the first case of love at first sight that ever came under my notice, but it is an unmistakable one. And, oh, I should say a malignant, if not a fatal, type of the disorder."

So closed the day of our travelers' arrival at Fort Leavenworth.

It was Saturday afternoon, on the sixth day of the visitors' stay at the fort, and the ladies were on the parade ground watching the drill, when the word came that the steamer was coming up the river with troops on board.

"Our raw recruits at last," said Captain Neville, who was standing with the ladies.

"And that means, I suppose, that we are to start for Farthermost at once," said Mrs. Neville.

"Not on the instant," laughed the captain.

"This is Saturday afternoon. To-morrow is Sunday. We shall leave on Monday morning."

"Rain or shine?"

"Fair or foul, of course," said the captain.

It was really the steamer with the new recruits on board. Half an hour later they landed and marched into the fort, under the command of the recruiting sergeant, and they were received with cheers.

That evening Captain Neville announced his intention to set out for Farthermost on Monday morning. Of course this was expected. And equally, of course, not one word was said to induce him to defer his departure for one day. Military duty must take precedence of mere politeness.

The next day being the Sabbath, the ladies attended the morning service in the chapel of the fort. The irrepressible Major —— was present, and after the benediction, attached himself to Captain Neville's party, and walked home with them to the colonel's quarters, but not next to Cora, who walked with Mrs. Neville.

As the major paused at the door, Mrs. —— had no, choice but to invite him to come in and stay to dinner, adding that this was the last day of the Nevilles' and Mrs. Rothsay's sojourn at the fort.

The major thanked the lady, and followed her into the drawing room, where he sat talking to the colonel, while the ladies went to their rooms to lay off their bonnets and cloaks. They came down only when called by the bell to the early Sunday dinner.

As this was the last day of the guests' stay at Fort Leavenworth, many of the officers dropped in to say good-by; so that the party sat up rather later than usual, and it was near midnight when they retired to rest.

Corona did not go to bed at once. She sat from twelve to one writing a letter to her Uncle Clarence, not knowing how the next was to be mailed to him.

The next morning was so clear, bright, and beautiful that every one said that it must be the perfection of Indian summer.

On the road outside the walls five strong army wagons, to which stout mules were harnessed, stood in a line. These were to serve the men as carriages by day and couches by night. Besides these, there were two carriage of better make and more comfortable fittings for the captain and the ladies of his party.

The farewell breakfast at the colonel's quarters partook of the nature of an official banquet. It was unnecessarily prolonged.

At length the company left the table.

Mrs. Neville and Mrs. Rothsay went to their rooms to put on hats and cloaks. As soon as they were ready they came down to bid good-by to Mrs. —— and some other ladies who had come to the colonel's quarters to see them off.

When these adieus were all said, the colonel gave Mrs. Rothsay his arm to lead her to the carriage, which stood in line with the army wagons on the road outside the walls.

Captain and Mrs. Neville had gone on before.

"There, the steamer has landed, and here are some people coming up from it," said the colonel, pausing at the gate with Corona on his arm, as a heavy carriage,

drawn by a pair of powerful draught horses, came up from the steamboat landing, and drew up at the gate.

A tall man, in a long overcoat and a fur cap, jumped down and approached Corona.

"Uncle Clarence! Oh, heaven of heavens! Uncle Clarence!" she exclaimed, pale and faint with excess of surprise and joy.

"Yes, my dear; I am going with you. See, I have my own carriage and horses, brought all the way by steamer from St. Louis. Our own servants, brought all the way from North End. Now introduce me to your friend here, and later I will tell you all about it," said the newcomer, with a smile, as he kissed his niece.

"Oh, Colonel ——, this is my dear Uncle Clarence—Mr. Clarence Rockharrt, I mean," said Corona, in a rapture of confusion.

"How do you do, sir? I am very glad to see you. Really going over the plains with this train?" inquired the colonel, as the two gentlemen shook hands.

CHAPTER XIX

THE NEWCOMERS

"YES, colonel," briskly replied Clarence, "I am really going out to the frontier! I have not enlisted in the army, nor have I received any appointment as post trader or Indian agent from the government, nor missionary or schoolmaster from any Christian association. But, all the same, I am en route for the wilderness on my own responsibility, by my own conveyance, at my own expense, and with this outgoing trail—if there be no objection," added Clarence, with a sudden obscure doubt arising in his mind that there might exist some military regulation against the attachment of any outsider to the trail of army wagons going over the plains from fort to fort.

"'Objections!' What objections could there possibly be, my dear sir? I fancy there could be nothing worse than a warm welcome for you," replied the colonel.

At that moment Captain Neville, who had put his wife in their carryall, came up to see what had delayed his guest.

"My dear Mrs. Rothsay, we are ready to start," he said. Then seeing Mr. Clarence, whom he had met in

Washington and liked very much, he seized his hand and exclaimed:

"Why, Rockharrt, my dear fellow! You here! This is a surprise, indeed! I am very glad to see you! How are you? When did you arrive?" and he shook the hand of the newcomer as if he would have shaken it off.

"I am very well, thank you, captain, and have just landed from the boat. I hope you and your wife are quite well."

"Robust, sir! Robust! So glad to see you! But so sorry you did not arrive a few days sooner, so that we might have seen more of you. You have come, I suppose, all this distance to bid a last, supplementary farewell to your dear favorite niece?"

"I have come to go with her to the frontier, if I may have the privilege of traveling with your trail of wagons."

"Why, assuredly. We are always glad of good company on the way," heartily responded the captain.

"Oh, beg pardon, and thank you very much; but I did not intend to 'beat' my way. Look there!" exclaimed Clarence, with a brighter smile, as he pointed to the commodious carriage, drawn by a pair of fine draught horses, that stood waiting for him, and to the covered wagon, drawn by a pair of stout mules, that was coming up behind.

"Oh! Ah! Yes, I see! You are traveling with your retinue. But is not this a very sudden move on your part?" demanded the captain.

"So sudden in its impulse that it might be mistaken for the flight of a criminal, had it not been so deliberate in its execution. The fact is, sir, I am very much attached to my widowed niece, and not being able to dissuade her from her purpose of going out into the Indian country, and being her natural protector and an unincumbered bachelor, I decided to follow her. And now I feel very happy to have overtaken her in the nick of time."

"I see! I see!" said the captain with a laugh.

While this talk was still going on, Corona turned to take a better look at the great, strong carriage in which her uncle had driven up from the steamboat landing. There, to her surprise and delight, she saw young Mark, from Rockhold, seated on the box. He was staring at her, trying to catch her eye, and when he did so he grinned and bobbed, and bobbed and grinned, half a dozen times, in as many half seconds.

"Why, Mark! I am so surprised!" said Corona, as she went toward him. "I am so glad to see you!"

"Yes'm. Thanky'm. So is I. Yes'm, an' dar's mammy an' daddy an' Sister Phebe 'hind dar in de wagon," jerking his head toward the rear.

Corona looked, and her heart leaped with joy to see the dear, familiar faces of the colored servants who had been about her from her childhood. For there on the front seat of the wagon sat old John, from Rockhold, with the reins in his hands, drawing up the team of mules, while on one side of him sat his middle-aged

wife, Martha, the housekeeper, and on the other his young daughter, Phebe, once lady's maid to Corona Rothsay.

Corona uttered a little cry of joy as she hastened toward the wagon. The three colored people saw her at once, and, with the unconventionality of their old servitude, shouted out in chorus!

"How do, Miss C'rona?"

"Sarvint, Miss C'rona!"

"Didn't 'spect to see we dem come trapesin' arter yer 'way out yere, did yer now?"

And they also grinned and bobbed, and bobbed and grinned, between every word, as they tumbled off their seats and ran to meet her.

Mr. Clarence hoisted the two women to their seats, one on each side of the driver, and then turned to Corona.

"Come, my dear. Let me put you into our carriage," he said, as he drew her arm within his own and led her on.

"Oh! I have not taken leave of Colonel —— yet. Where is he?" she inquired, looking around.

"Here I am, my dear Mrs. Rothsay. Waiting at the carriage door to put you in your seat and to wish you a pleasant journey. And certainly, if this initial day is any index you will have a pleasant one, for I never saw finer weather at this season of the year," said the colonel cheerily, as he received Corona from her uncle's hand,

and, with the stately courtesy of the olden time, placed her in her seat.

"I thank you, colonel, for all the kindness I have received at your hands and at those of Mrs. ——. I shall never forget it. Good-by," said Corona, giving him her hand.

He lifted the tips of her fingers to his lips, bowed, and stepped back.

Mr. Clarence entered the carriage and gave the order to the young coachman. Carriage and covered wagon then fell into the procession, which began to move on. A farewell gun was fired from the fort.

"Uncle Clarence," said Corona, after the party had been on the road some hours, "Uncle Clarence, how came you first to think of such a strange move as to leave the works and come out here? And when did you first make up your mind to do it?"

"I think, Cora, my dear, that the idea came vaguely into my mind, as a mere possibility, after my father's death. It occurred to me that there was no absolute necessity for my remaining longer at the works. You see, Cora, however much I might have wished for a change in my life, I never could have vexed my father by even expressing such a wish, while he lived. After his death I thought of it vaguely."

"Oh! why didn't you tell me?"

"My mind was not made up; therefore I spoke of the matter to no one. I only hinted something to you, when on bidding you good-by at North End Junction I

told you that you might possibly see me before you would expect to do so."

"Yes; I remember that well. I thought you only said that to comfort me. And you really meant that you might possibly follow me?"

"Yes, my dear; that is just what I meant. I could not speak more plainly because I was not sure of my own course. I had to think of Fabian."

"Yes. How, at last, came you to the conclusion of following your poor niece?"

"Fabian and myself could not agree upon a certain policy in conducting our business. There was no longer the father's controlling influence, you see, and Fabian is the head of the firm; and I could not do business on his principles," said Mr. Clarence, flushing up to his brow.

"No; I suppose you could not," said Cora, meditatively; and then she was sorry that she had said anything that might imply a reproach to the good-humored uncle she had left behind.

"Still, I said nothing about a dissolution of partnership until Fabian complained that I, or my policy, was a dead weight around his neck, dragging him down from the most magnificent flights to mere sordid drudgery. Then I proposed that we should dissolve partnership. And he said he was sorry. And I believe he was; but also glad, inconsistent as that seems. For he was sorry I could not come into his policy, and stay in the firm; but since I could not so agree with him, he was re-

lieved when I proposed to withdraw from it. We disagreed, my dear Cora, but we did not fall out; we parted good friends and brothers with tears in our eyes. Poor little Violet cried a good deal. But you know she has such a tender heart, poor child! Look at that herd of deer, Cora, standing on the top of that swell of the land to the right, and actually gazing at the trail without a motion or a panic. I hope nobody will shoot at them!" exclaimed Mr. Clarence, suddenly breaking off in his discourse to point to the denizens of the thicket and the prairie, until upon some sudden impulse the whole herd turned and bounded away.

So they fared on through that glorious autumn day—over the vast, rolling, solitary prairie—now rising to a smooth, gradual elevation that revealed the circle of the whole horizon where it met the sky; now descending into a wide, shallow hollow, where the rising ground around inclosed them as in an amphitheater; but everywhere along the trail, the prairie grass, dried and burnished by the autumn's suns and winds, burned like gold on the hills and bronze in the hollows, giving a singularly beautiful effect in light and shade of mingling metallic hues.

At noon the captain ordered a halt, and all the teams were drawn up in a line; and all the men got out to feed and water the horses and mules, and to prepare their own dinner.

They were now beside a clear, deep, narrow stream, a tributary of the Kansas River, running through a pic-

turesque valley, carpeted with long grass, and bordered with low, well-wooded hills on either side. The burnished gold and bronze of the long dried grass on the river's brim, dotted here and there with a late scarlet prairie flower, the brilliant crimson and purple of the autumn foliage that clothed the trees, the bright blue of the sky and the soft white of the few downy clouds floating overhead, and all reflected and duplicated in the river below, made a beauty and glory of color that must have delighted the soul of an artist, and pleased the eye of even the most careless observer.

Mike O'Reilly, the captain's orderly, was busy spreading a table cloth on the grass, at the foot of a hill on the right, and old John, Mr. Clarence's man, was emulating Mike by spreading a four-yard square of white damask at a short distance behind him.

Our friends had nearly finished their lunch, when something—she never could tell what—caused Corona to look behind her. Then she shrieked! All looked to see the cause of her sudden fright.

There stood a group of Indians, with blankets around their forms, and gleaming tomahawks about their shoulders.

"Pawnees—friendly. Don't be afraid. Give them something to eat," said the captain, in a low tone, addressing the first part of his conversation to Corona and the last part to Mrs. Neville.

But Corona had never seen an Indian in her life, and

could not at once get over her panic caused by the sight of those bare, keen-edged axes gleaming in the sun.

Captain Neville spoke to them in their native tongue, and they replied. The conversation that ensued was quite unintelligible to Clarence and Corona, but not to Mrs. Neville, who beckoned to two squaws who stood humbly in the rear of the braves. They were both clothed in short, rude, blue cotton skirts, with blankets over their shoulders. The elder squaw carried a pack on her back; the younger one carried a baby snugly in a hood made of the loop of her blanket at the back of her neck.

They both approached the ladies, chattering as they came; the elder one threw down her pack on the grass and began to open it, and display a number of dressed raccoon skins stretched upon sticks, aud by gibberring and gesticulations expressed her wish to sell them.

Neither of the ladies wished to buy; but Mrs. Neville gave her loaves of bread and junks of dried beef from the hampers on the grass, and Corona gave her money.

She put the money in a little fur pouch she carried at her belt, and she packed the bread and beef in the bundle with the highly flavored raccoon skins. She was not fastidious.

While Mrs. Neville and Corona were occupied with the squaw, Captain Neville and Mr. Clarence had been feasting the braves, and the attendants had been washing dishes, repacking hampers, and reloading wagons for a fresh start.

When all was ready the wayfarers took leave of the Indians and re-entered their conveyances and resumed their route, leaving the savages still feasting on the fragments that remained.

It was now two o'clock in the afternoon, as the long trail of carryalls and army wagons passed up from the beautiful valley and out upon the vast prairie that still rolled on before them in hills and hollows of gold and bronze, blazing under the bright autumnal sun.

Men and women, mules and horses, had all been rested and refreshed by their mid-day halt and repast.

The people, however, seemed less inclined to observe and converse than in the forenoon.

Even Clarence saw more than one flock of birds sail over their heads, and made no sign; saw a herd of deer stand and gaze, and said not a word.

At length Clarence took out his cigar and lit it, and as he smoked he watched the descending sun until it sank below the horizon and sent up the most singular afterglow that Clarence had ever seen—a shower of sparks and needle-like flames from the edge of the prairie immediately under the horizon.

"Looks like de worl' was ketchin' on fire ober dere, Marse Clarence," said young Mark, speaking for the first time since they had resumed their march.

"It is only the light reflected by the prairie, my boy," kindly replied Mr. Clarence. And then he smoked on in silence, while the afterglow died out, the twilight faded, and one by one the stars came out. Corona

seemed to be slumbering in her seat. Young Mark crooned low, as if to himself, a weird, old camp-meeting hymn. It was so dark that he could not have seen to guide his horses, had not the captain's carryall been immediately in front of his own, and the long trail of wagons in front of the captain's, with lantern carried by the advance guard to show the way.

"What's the matter?" suddenly called out Mr. Clarence, who was aroused from his reverie by the halt of the whole procession.

"We 'pears to got sumwhurze," replied Mark, strongly pulling in his horses, which had nearly run into the back of the captain's stationary carryall in front.

"We are at Burley's," called out Captain Neville from his seat.

While he spoke Mike O'Reilly brought up a lantern to show their way to the house.

Clarence alighted and handed down his niece, took her arm, and followed Captain and Mrs. Neville past the wagons and mules and groups of men through a door that admitted them into a long, low-ceiled room, lighted and warmed by a large cooking stove in the middle of the floor. Rude, unpainted wooden chairs, benches and tables were the only furniture, if we except the rough shelves on which coarse crockery and tinware were arranged and under which iron cooking utensils were piled.

Captain Neville and Mr. Clarence returned to the wagons to see for themselves that their valuable personal effects were safely bestowed for the night, and

that the horses and mules were well cared for. The proprietor of this place attended them.

While Mrs. Neville and Corona still walked up and down in the room, a small dark-haired woman came in and nodded to them, and asked if they would like to go upstairs and have some water to wash their faces.

Both ladies thankfully accepted this offer, and followed the landlady up a rude flight of steps that led up from the corner of the room to an open trap door, through which they entered the garret.

This was nothing better than a loft, whose rough plank floor formed the ceiling of the room below, and whose sloping roof rose from the floor front and back, and met overhead.

Here they rested through the night.

Let us hasten on. It was the thirteenth day out. The trail had crossed nearly the whole of the Indian Territory, and were within one day's march of Fort Farthermost, on the Texan frontier.

They had passed the previous night at Fort W., and at sunrise they had crossed the Rio Negro, and before noon they had made nearly a score of miles toward their destination. They halted beside a little stream that took its rise in a spring among the rocks on the right hand of the trail. Here the party meant to rest for two hours before resuming the march to Fort Farthermost, which they hoped to reach that same night.

As usual at the noon rest, mules and horses were unharnessed and led down to the stream to be watered and

fed. Fires were built and rustic cranes improvised to hang the pots and kettles gypsy style. Since the first day out old Martha had been constituted cook and old John butler to our party.

In a short time Martha had prepared such a hot dinner as was practicable under the circumstances, and John had laid the cloth.

When all was ready the party of four sat down on the dry grass to partake of the meal, to every course of which they all did ample justice.

"This is our last *al fresco* feast," said Captain Neville, after dinner, as he filled the glasses of the two ladies and of Clarence Rockharrt and proposed the toast:

"Our lasting friendship and companionship."

It was honored warmly.

Next Clarance proposed:

"Mrs. Neville," which was also honored and responded to by the captain in a neat little speech, at the end of which he proposed:

"Mrs. Rothsay."

This was duly met by Clarence with a brief acknowledgment. Mr. Clarence was no speechmaker. But he proposed the health of—

"Our gallant captain," which was drunk with enthusiasm.

The captain responded, and proposed—

"Mr. Clarence Rockharrt," which was cordially honored.

Then Mr. Clarence made his last little speech of personal thanks.

After this the company arose and separated, to wander about the camping ground, to stretch their cramped limbs before returning to their seats on their carryalls.

"Come, Clarence, let us follow this little stream up to its head. It cannot be far away," said Corona.

Mr. Clarence silently drew her arm within his, and they walked on up the little valley until it narrowed into a gorge, clothed with stunted trees in brilliant autumn hues, through which the gray rocks jutted. The tinkling of the spring which supplied the stream could be heard while it was yet out of sight.

"Did you bring your drinking cup with you, Clarence? I should like a draught from the spring," said Corona.

"Oh, yes," said her uncle, producing the silver cup. They clambered up the side of the gorge until they reached the spring—a great jet of water issuing from the rock. But there both stopped short, spellbound, in amazement. On a ledge of rock above the spring, and facing them, stood a majestic man, clothed in coat of buckskin, faced and bordered with fur, leggings of buckskin and sandals of buffalo hide. On his head he wore a fur cap that half concealed his tawny hair. The face was fine, but sunburnt, and half covered with a long, tawny beard. Corona looked up, and recognized—

Regulas Rothsay!

With a cry of terror, she struck her hands to her

eyes, as if to dispel an optical illusion, and sank half fainting, to be caught in the arms of her uncle and laid against the side of the rocks, while he sprinkled her face with water from the spring.

She recovered her breath, opened her eyes, and looked anxiously, fearfully, all around her.

There was no one in sight anywhere. The apparition had vanished. Corona and her uncle were alone.

CHAPTER XX

THE MEETING ON THE MOUNT

"WHAT is this? Am I mad? Have I seen a spirit? Oh, Clarence, what is it?" cried Corona, in a tumult of emotion in which her life seemed throbbing away as she clung to her uncle for support.

"Try to compose yourself, dear Cora," he answered, as he gently laid her down on the mossy rocks, and went and brought her water from the spring in his pocket cup.

She raised herself and drank it at his request, and then staring wildly at him, repeated her questions:

"Oh, what was it? Who was here just now? Or was it—or was it—was it—delusion?"

"For Heaven's sake, Cora, calm yourself. It was Regulas Rothsay who stood here a moment ago."

"Rule himself, and no delusion! But, oh! I knew it! I knew it all the time!" she exclaimed, still trembling violently.

"My darling Cora, try——"

"Where did he go? Where?" she cried, staggering to her feet and clinging to her uncle. "Where? Oh, take me to him!"

"Do you see that log cabin on the plateau above us, Cora, to the right?" he said, pointing in the direction of which he spoke.

Her eyes followed his index, and she saw a cottage of rough-hewn logs standing against the rocky steep at the back of the broad ledge above them.

"What do you mean? Is he up there? Is he up there?" she breathlessly demanded.

"Yes; he is in that hut. I saw him climb the rocks and enter it, and close the door. But, for Heaven's sake! compose yourself, my dear. You are shaking as with an ague, and your hands are cold as ice," said Clarence.

"In that hut, did you say? So near? So near?"

"Yes, dear Cora; but be calm."

"Take me there! Take me there! Oh, give me your arm, Uncle Clarence, and help me. My limbs fail now, when I need them more than ever before. Ah! and my heart fails, too!" she moaned, growing suddenly pale and fainter as she leaned heavily against her uncle.

"Cora, darling! Cora, rouse yourself, my girl! This weakness is not like you. Take courage; all will be well," said Mr. Clarence, caressingly, laying his hand on her head.

She sighed heavily as she asked:

"How will he receive me? Oh, how will he receive me? Will he have me now? But he must! Oh, he must! For I will never, never, never go down this mountain side again without him! I will perish on its

rocks sooner! Oh, come, come! Help me to reach that hut, Clarence!"

There was no resisting her wild and passionate appeal. Clarence put his arm around her waist, to sustain her more effectually, as he said:

"Now lean on me, Cora, and step carefully, for the path is almost hidden, and very rugged."

"Oh, Clarence, did he recognize me? did he, Clarence? did he?" she eagerly inquired.

"Yes, Cora, he did," gravely answered the young uncle.

"And turned and went away! And turned and went away! Went away and left me without one word!" she wailed, in doubt and distress.

"Cora, my dear, pray control yourself," said Clarence, uneasily.

"Did he speak to you?" she suddenly inquired.

"Not one word."

"Did you speak to him?"

"No; for he was gone in an instant, before I recovered from my astonishment at his appearance."

"How did he look? how did he look when he recognized me? In anger?"

"No, Corona; but in much sorrow, pity, and tenderness," gravely replied Clarence.

"Then why did he leave me? Oh, why did he turn away from me?"

"My dear, he had every reason to think that his sud-

den appearance had frightened you, and that his presence grieved and distressed you."

"Why, oh, why should he have thought so?" she demanded, with increasing agitation.

"My dear girl, you were frightened. I might say appalled. You saw him suddenly, and with a half-smothered scream threw your hands to your eyes as if to shut out the sight, and then sank to the ground. Now what could the man think but that you feared and hated the sight of him?"

"Just as he thought before! Just as he thought before!"

"And he turned sorrowfully away and walked up to his cabin on the mount, entered, and shut the door. I saw him do it."

"Just as he did before! Just as he did before! Oh, Rule! what a fatality! That appearances should always be false and disastrous between us!" she moaned.

"Not in this case, Cora. At least not from this hour. Come, we are on the ledge now!" said Clarence, as he helped his niece, who with one more high step stood on the top of the plateau, her back to one of the most glorious prairie scenes in nature, her face to a rocky, pine-dotted precipice, against which stood a double log cabin with a door in the middle and a window on each side.

"There is the hut! Now, shall I take you there, or shall I wait here and let you go alone?" he inquired, as they stood side by side gazing on the hut.

She did not answer. Her eyes were riveted on the

door of the cabin, while she leaned heavily on the arm of her uncle.

"I see how it is; you are weakening, losing courage. Let me support you to the door," said Clarence, putting his arm around her waist.

But she drew herself up suddenly.

"Oh, let me go alone, dear Uncle Clarence. My meeting with Rule should be face to face only," she replied, still trembling, but resolute.

"Are you sure you can do it?"

"Oh, yes, yes! My limbs shall no longer refuse their office!"

Clarence threw himself down at the foot of a pine tree to sit and await events.

He took out his watch and looked at the time.

"It is one o'clock," he said to himself. "At two sharp the trail will move, or ought to do so. Perhaps Neville might give us half an hour's grace, though. At any rate, I will wait here three-quarters of an hour, and if in that time I hear nothing from Rothsay or Cora I shall go down the mountain to explain the situation to Neville."

So saying, Mr. Clarence took out his pipe, filled and lighted it, and smoked.

Corona, like a somnambulist or a blind woman, went slowly toward the log cabin, holding out her hands before her. She soon reached it, leaned for a moment against the log wall to recover her breath and her courage, and then knocked.

The door was instantly opened, and Regulas Rothsay stood on the threshold, still clothed in his hunter's suit of buckskin, but without the fur cap—the same Rule, unchanged except in habiliments and in the length of his untrimmed, tawny hair and beard.

In the instant of meeting she raised her eyes to his, and read in them the undying love of his heart.

With a cry of rapture, of infinite relief and infinite content, she sank upon his doorstep, clasped his knees, and laid her beautiful head down prone on his feet. Only for a second.

He instantly raised her in his arms, pressed her to his heart, kissed her, and kissed her again and again, bore her into the cabin, placed her in the only chair, and knelt down beside her.

She turned and threw her arms around his neck, and dropped her head upon his bosom.

And not a word was spoken between them. The emotions of both were too great for utterance, too great almost for endurance.

They were bathed in a flood of light from the noonday sun pouring its rays through the open door and windows of the cabin. It was the apotheosis of love.

Rule was the first to speak.

"You are welcome, oh, welcome, as life to the dead, my love! But I do not understand my blessedness—I do not," he said, dropping his head on her shoulders, while she still lay on his bosom, in a dream, a trance of perfect contentment.

"Oh, Rule, my husband, my lord, my king! I have come to you, unconsciously led by the Divine Providence! But I have come to you, to stay forever, if you will have me! I have come, never, never, never to leave you, unless you send me away!" she said.

"I send you away, dear? I send away my restored life from me? Ah, you know, you know how impossible that would be! But if I should try to tell you, dear, all that I feel at this moment, I should fail, and talk folly, for no human words can utter this, dear! But I am amazed—amazed to see you here with me, as the dead to the material world might be, on awaking amid the splendors of Paradise!"

"You wish to know how I came?"

"No! I do not! Amazed as I may be, I am content to know that you are here, dear—here! But," he said, looking around on the rudeness of his hut, "oh, what a place to receive you in! I left you in a palace, surrounded by all the splendors and luxuries of civilization! I receive you in a log cabin, bare of even the necessaries and comforts of life!" he added, gravely.

"But you left me a discarded, broken-hearted woman, and you receive me a restored and happy wife!" she exclaimed.

"But, oh, Cora! can you live with me here, here? Look around you, dear! Look on the home you would share!—the walls of logs, the chimney of rocks, the floor of stone, the cups and dishes of earthenware, pewter and iron, the——"

She interrupted him, passionately:

"But you are here, Rule! You! you! And the log hut is transfigured into a mansion of light! A mansion like the many in our Heavenly Father's house! Oh, Rule! you, you are all, all to me! life, joy, riches, splendor, all to me! Am I all to you, Rule?"

"All of earth and heaven, dear."

"Oh, happy I am! Oh, I thank God, I thank God for this happiness! Rule, we will never part again!—never for a single day! But be together, to-day and

'To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow,
To the last syllable of recorded time,'

and through the endless ages of eternity! Oh, Rule, how could we ever have mistaken our hearts? How could we ever have parted?"

"The mistake was mine only, dear. After what you told me on our marriage day, I lost all hope, all interest and ambition in life. I had toiled and striven and conquered, for the one dear prize; all my battle of life was fought for you; all my victories were won for you, and were laid at your feet. But when I found that all my love and hope had brought only grief and despair to you —then, dear, all my triumphs turned into Dead Sea fruit on my lips! Then I left all and came into the wilderness; left no trace behind me; effaced myself from your life, from the world, as effectually as I could do it;

and so—believing it to be for your good and happiness —died to the world and died to you!"

"Oh, Rule! Miserable woman that I was! I wrecked your life! I wrecked your career!"

"No, dear, no; the mistake, I said, was mine! I should have trusted your heart. I should have given you the time you implored; I should not have fled in the madness of suddenly wounded affection."

"Oh, Rule! if you could have only looked back on me after you went away, only known the anguish your disappearance caused me and the inconsolable sorrow of the time that followed it."

"If I could have supposed it possible even, I would have hastened to you, from the uttermost parts of the earth!"

"And then they reported you dead, murdered by the Comanches, in the massacre of La Terrepeur, and sorrow was deepened to despair."

"Yes; I heard of that massacre. The report of my death must have arisen in this way: I had lived at La Terrepeur for many months, but had left and come to this place some days before the massacre. Some other unfortunate was murdered and burned in the deserted hut, whose bones were found in ashes. I did not return to contradict the report. I wished to be dead to the world, as I was dead to hope, dead to you, dead to myself!"

"Oh, Rule! in all that time how I longed, famished,

fainted, died, for your presence! Yes, Rule; died daily."

"My own dear Cora, how could I have mistaken you? Oh! if I had only known!"

"Ah, yes! if you had only known my heart, or I had only known your whereabouts! In either case we should have met before, and not lost four years out of our lives! But now, Rule," she said, with sudden animation, "now 'We meet to part no more,' as the hymn says. I will never, never, never, leave you for a day! I will be your very shadow!"

"My sunshine, rather, dear!"

"And are you content, Rule?"

"Infinitely."

"And happy?"

"Perfectly."

"Thank God! So am I. But why, oh, why when we met by the spring just now, why, when I was crazed with joy and fear at the sudden sight of you, why did you turn away and leave me?" she passionately demanded.

He looked at her serenely, incisively, and answered, calmly, quietly:

"Dear, because you shrank from me, threw your hands up before your eyes, as if to shut out the sight of me. Dear, your own sudden appearance before me at the spring, to which I had gone for my noonday draught of water, nearly overwhelmed me; but I readily recovered myself and understood it, connected it with the

trail below, and concluded that you were on your way to Farthermost to join your brother, whom I had heard of as one of the officers of the new fort. Then, believing that my presence distressed you, I went away."

"Oh, Rule!"

After a little while Rothsay inquired:

"Was not that Mr. Clarence Rockharrt whom I saw with you by the spring?"

"Yes; Uncle Clarence. He helped me up to this ledge, and then he stayed outside while I came in here to look for you."

"Let us go and bring him in now, dear," said Rule.

And the two walked out together.

But no one was to be seen on the plateau; only, on the ground under the pine tree where Mr. Clarence had rested was a piece of white paper, kept in place by a small stone laid upon it.

Rule picked up the stone, and handed the paper to Cora.

It proved to be a leaf from Mr. Clarence's pocket tablets, and on it was written:

"I am going down the mountain to tell Captain Neville that my party will camp here to-night, and join him at the fort to-morrow, so that he may go on with his train at once, if he should see fit. CLARENCE."

"He saw you receive me; he knew it was all right; then he grew tired of waiting for me. He thought I had

forgotten him, and so I had, and he left this paper and went down to the trail," Corona explained with a smile.

"Shall we go down and see your friends, Cora? Tell me what you wish, dear," said Rothsay.

Corona looked at her watch, and then replied:

"Courtesy would have required me to go down and take leave of Captain and Mrs. Neville before leaving them, but it is too late now. Their caravan is on the march by this time. They were to have resumed their route at two o'clock. It is after three now."

"We can go to Farthermost later, dear. It is but half a day's ride from here. Shall we go down the mountain and join Clarence? Is it your wish, Cora?"

"No, not yet. He is very well as he is. He can wait for us. Let us sit down here together. I have so much to tell, and so much to hear," said Corona.

"Yes, dear; and I also have 'so much to tell, and so much to hear,'" assented Rothsay, as they sat down at the foot of the young pine tree, with their backs to the rising cliffs and their faces to the descending mountain, the brook at its foot, and the vast, sunlit prairie, in its autumn coat of dry grass, rolling in smooth hills and hollows of gold and bronze off to the distant horizon.

"Tell me, dear, of all that has befallen you in these dark years that have parted us. Tell me of your grandparents. Do they still live?" inquired Rothsay.

"Ah, no!" replied Corona. And then she entered upon the family history of the last four years and four

months, since Rule had disappeared, and told him of the sudden death of her dear old grandmother on the very day on which the false report of Rothsay's murder reached them.

She told him of her Uncle Fabian's marriage to Violet Wood a year later.

Of her widowed grandfather's second marriage to Mrs. Stillwater, whom Rothsay had known in his childhood as Miss Rose Flowers.

Of the recent death of this second wife, followed very soon after by that of the aged widower.

And finally she told him of her own resolution to follow her brother Sylvan to his post of duty at Fort Farthermost, to open a mission home school for Indian children, and to devote her life and fortune to their service; and of the good opportunity offered her by the kindness of Colonel Z. in procuring for her the escort of Captain and Mrs. Neville, who were on their way to Farthermost with a party of recruits.

"And Clarence? How came he to be of the company?" inquired Rothsay.

"Uncle Clarence could not agree with Uncle Fabian in business policy. So they dissolved partnership very amicably and with mutual satisfaction. This was after I had left Rockhold. Clarence gathered up his wealth, brought three devoted servants with him, and set out to follow me. At St. Louis he purchased wagons, tents, horses, mules, and every convenience for crossing the plains. He overtook and surprised us at Fort Leaven-

worth on the very day of our intended departure for Farthermost."

"Clarence came for your sake."

"Yes; and he has enjoyed the journey. On the free prairie he has been like a boy out of school—so buoyant, so joyous—the life of the whole company."

"What will he do now?"

"I think he will go on to Farthermost for this season. After this I do not know what he will do or where he will go."

"He will remain in this quarter, which offers a grand field for a man like Clarence Rockharrt," said Rothsay.

"I should think it might—in the future," replied Corona.

"In the near future. The tide of emigration is pouring into this section so fast that very soon the ground will be disputed with the Mexican government, and true men and brave men will be much wanted here."

"Yes," said Corona, indifferently, for she cared very little at this moment for public interests. "But tell me of yourself, Rule. I long to hear you talk of yourself."

Rothsay was no egotist. He never had been addicted to speaking of himself or his feelings.

Now, at her urgent request, he told her in brief how he had renounced all his honors in the country for the sake of the woman for whose sake, also, he had first striven to win them and had won them.

"Dear," he said, "from the time you first noticed me,

when you were a sweet child of seven summers and I a boy of twelve—yes, winters—for while all your years had been summers, dear—summers of love, shelter, comfort, luxury—all my years had been winters of loss, want, orphanage, and destitution—you were my help, support, inspiration. I longed to be worthy of your friendship, your interest, your sympathy. And for all these things I toiled, endured, and struggled."

"I know! Oh, I know!" said Corona, earnestly.

"Yes, dear, you know it all. For who but you were with me in the spirit through all the struggle, helping, supporting, encouraging, until you seemed to me my muse, my soul, my inner and purer and higher self. Dear, I wronged you when I connected your love with this world's pride. I wronged you bitterly, and I have suffered for it and made you suffer——"

"Oh, no, no, no, Rule! The fault was all my own! I am not so good and wise as you!" exclaimed Corona.

"Hush, dear! Hush! Hear me out!" said Rothsay, laying his hand gently on her head.

"Well, go on, but don't blame yourself. Oh, *'chevalier sans peur et sans reproche,'* " said Corona, fervently.

He resumed very quietly:

"When I had reached a position in this world's honor to which I dared to invite you, then I laid my victory at your feet and prayed you to share it. And, Corona, when the bishop had blessed our nuptials, I dreamed that we were blessed indeed. You know, dear, what a

miserable awakening I had from that dream on the evening of our wedding day."

"It was my fault! It was my fault! Oh, vain, foolish, infatuated woman that I was!" cried Corona.

"No, dear; you were not to blame. You were true, candid, natural through it all. Our betrothal, dear, was on your part the betrothal of friends. You did not know your own heart then. You went abroad with your grandparents, and, after two years of travel, you were thrown in the court circles of London, and exposed to all the splendors, temptations and fascinations of rank, culture and refinement, such as you had never met at home in your rural neighborhood. You were caught, dazzled, bewildered. You thought you loved the English duke who sought your hand——"

"But I never did, Rule. Oh, Heaven knows I never did. It was all self-delusion," broke in Corona.

"No; you never did. I saw that in the first instant that I met your eyes in the log cabin up yonder. You never did! It was a self-delusion. Yet you were under the influence of that self-delusion when I found you on our wedding evening in such a paroxysm of grief and despair that I—astonished and amazed at what I saw—shared your delusion and imagined that you loved this duke when you married me. What could I do, my own dear Cora, for whom I would have lived or died at bidding—what could I do but efface myself from your life?"

"Oh! you could have given me time—time to recover

from my mental illness, since I had done no evil willingly. Since I had kept my troth as well as I could. Since I had vowed to love and serve you all the days of my life. You should have given me time, Rule, to recover my senses and keep my vow."

"Yes; I should have done so! But, you see, I did not know. How could I know? Oh, my dear Cora! It cost me little to lay down all the honors I had won, for they were worthless to me if not shared by you, for whom they were won. But it cost my life almost to resign you. Mine was 'not the flight of a felon' or a coward, but the retirement of one sick, sick unto death of the world and of all the glory of the world. Some men in my case might have sought relief in death, but I—I knew I must live until the Lord of life should himself relieve me of duty. So I left the city on the night of my wedding day, the night also before my inauguration day."

"Oh, Rule! and as if it required that supreme act of renunciation to tear the veil from my eyes and let me see you as you were, and see my own heart as it was—from that hour I knew how much, how deeply, how eternally I loved you!" said Corona.

Rothsay raised her hand to his lips and kissed it. Then he resumed:

"I wrote two letters—one to you, explaining my motives for leaving, and advising you not to repeat to any one the subject or substance of our last interview, lest it should be misunderstood or misrepresented, and

should do you unmerited injury with an evil-thinking world——"

"Yes, Rule. See! See! I have that letter yet!" exclaimed Corona, hastily unbuttoning the front of her bodice and pulling up the little black silk bag which she wore next her heart, suspended from the silken cord around her neck, and taking from it the old, yellow, broken paper which contained the last lines he had written to her.

"You kept that all this time, dear?" he inquired, gently taking the paper and looking at it.

"Yes. Why not? It was the last relic I possessed of you. And it has never left me. I never showed it to a human being, because you did not wish me to do so. But you said you had written two letters. To whom was the other? We never heard of it."

Rothsay looked at her in surprise for a moment and answered:

"The other letter? Why, of course, it was my letter of resignation."

"Then it was never found! Never! If it had been, it would have saved much trouble. No one knew what had become of you, Rule. Not even I, except that you had left me on account of that last conversation between us, which you adjured me never to divulge. And oh! what amazement your disappearance caused; and what conjectures as to your fate! Many thought that you had been assassinated and your body sunk in the river. Oh, Rule! Many others thought that you had been

abducted by some political enemy—as if any force could have carried you off, Rule!"

Rothsay laughed for the first time during the interview. Corona continued:

"Advertisements were placed in all the papers, offering large rewards for information that should lead to the discovery of your fate or whereabouts, living or dead. And, oh! how many impostors came forward to claim the money with information that led to nothing at all. A sailor returning from Rio de Janeiro swore that you had shipped as a man before the mast and gone out with him, and that he had left you in the capital of Brazil. A fur trader from Alaska reported you killing seals in that territory. A returned miner swore that he had left you gold digging in California. A New Bedford sailor made his affidavit that he had seen you embark on a whaling ship for Baffin's Bay. These were the most hopeful reports. But there were others. There was never the body of an unknown man found anywhere that was not reported to be yours. Oh, Rule! think of the anguish all these rumors cost your friends!"

"Cost you, my poor Corona. I doubt if they cost any other human being a single pang."

"But all these rumors proved to be false, and your fate remained a mystery until it was apparently cleared up by the report of your murder by the Comanches in the massacre of La Terrepeur."

"A report as false as any of the others, as you see, yet with a better foundation in probability than any of those,

as I have explained. But how my letter of resignation should have been lost I cannot conjecture. I posted it with my own hand," said Rothsay, reflectively.

"Why, letters are occasionally lost in the mail! But, Rule, how was it that you neved heard of all the amazement and confusion that followed your flight, for the want of your letter to explain it?"

"Because, dear, from the time I left the State capital to this day I have never seen a newspaper or spoken to a civilized being."

"Rule!"

"It is true, dear! Look at me. Have I not degenerated into a savage?"

"No, no, no, Regulas Rothsay! you could never do that! Ah! how much nobler you look to me in that rude forest garb than even in the fine dress of the drawing room! But tell me about your journey from the city into the wilderness, and of your life since."

"I have been trying to do so, Cora, but every time I try to begin my narrative by reverting to the hour of my flight, I seem spellbound to that hour and cannot escape from it. But I will try again," he said, and he began his story.

He told her, in brief, that on leaving the Rockhold house and going out upon the sidewalk, he found the streets still alight with illuminated houses and alive with the orgies of revelers who had come to the inauguration.

In moving through the crowd he was unrecognized,

for who could suspect the black-coated figure passing alone along the street at midnight to be the governor-elect of the State, in whose honor the assembled multitudes were getting drunk?

His first intention had been to take a hack, drive to the railway depot, and board the first train going West. But the hacks were all engaged as sleeping berths by men who could not get accommodations in any of the houses of the overcrowded city.

So he set off to walk, and almost immediately came face to face with old Scythia, the friend of his childhood.

"Old Scythia!" exclaimed Corona, interrupting the narrative.

"Yes, dear; the old seeress of Raven Roost, as they used to call her. Of course, I never, even as a boy, believed in the supernatural powers of divination ascribed to her, but I must credit her with wonderful intuitions. She had divined the very crisis that had come, and in that hour of my agony and humiliation she exercised a strange power over me," said Rothsay; and then he took up the thread of his narrative again.

He told her that on leaving the State capital he had taken neither railway carriage nor river steamboat, but had tramped, with old Scythia by his side, all the way from the Cumberland Mountains to the Southwestern frontier.

The journey had taken them all the summer, for they traveled very slowly—sometimes walking no more than

ten miles a day, sometimes sleeping on pallets made of leaves under the trees of the forest, sometimes reaching a pioneer's log hut, where they could get a hot supper and a night's lodging. Sometimes stopping over Sunday in some settlement where there was no church, and where Rule, though not an ordained minister, would on Christian principles hold a service and preach a sermon.

So they journeyed over the mountains, and through the valleys and forests, until at length, in the end of October, they arrived at the poorest, loneliest, and most forlorn of all the pioneer settlements they had seen.

This was La Terrepeur, on the borders of the Indian Reserve. It was a settlement of about twenty log huts, in a small valley shut in by densely wooded hills, and watered by a narrow brook. It was too near the country of the Comanches for safety, and too far from the nearest fort for protection. There was neither church nor schoolhouse within a hundred miles.

The travelers were hospitably received by the pioneers, and here, as the autumn was far advanced, and travel difficult, they determined to halt for the winter at least, and in the spring to go farther south in search of Scythia's tribe, the Nez Percees, who had been moved away from their former hunting grounds.

They were feasted and lodged by the hutters that night. The next morning the men turned out in a body, felled trees and cleared a spot on the slope of a wooded hill, sawed logs and built two huts, one for Rothsay, and one for old Scythia. They were finished before night.

And then the settlers had a house-warming, which was a breakdown dance to the music of the one fiddle in the settlement, and a supper of such eatables and drinkables as the place could afford.

But there was no furniture in these two primitive dwellings. So once more these wayfarers had each to sleep on a bed of leaves.

On the second day the man who owned the only mule and cart, and was the only expressman and carrier to the settlement, offered to go to the nearest post trader's station—a distance of fifty miles—and purchase anything that the strangers might need, if said strangers had the money to buy.

Rothsay had money in notes, hardly thought of, and never looked at, except when, on their long journey, he had to take out his pocket-book to pay for accommodations at some log cabin, or to purchase a change of under clothing at some post trader's.

Also old Scythia had a pouch of silver and gold coin, saved from the money that had been regularly sent to her by Rule from the time when he first began to earn wages to the time when they set out for the wilderness in company.

Of this money they gave the frontier expressman all that he required to purchase the plainest furniture for the log cabins—bedding, cooking utensils, crockery ware, and some groceries.

"Yer can't buy bed or mattresses at the post trader's; but yer can buy ticking, and we can sew it up for yer,

and the men will stuff it with straw. There's plenty of straw," said one of the kindly women, speaking for all her neighbors.

And the expressman set out with his list.

In three days he was back again with a satisfactory supply. The women made the straw beds and pillows and hemmed the sheets. The men filled the ticks and "knocked together" a pine table and a few rude, three-legged stools. And so Rothsay and old Scythia were settled for the winter.

Rothsay took upon himself the office of teacher and preacher. Among the articles brought from the post trader's were a few Bibles, hymn books, and elementary school books, slates and pencils.

He began his labors by holding a religious service in his own cabin on the first Sabbath of his sojourn at La Terrepeur, which—perhaps for its rarity—was attended by the whole of the little community. And on the next day he opened his little school in his hut, where he taught the children all day, and where he slept at night. Old Scythia's cabin was kitchen and dining room.

All that autumn, winter and spring, Rule labored among the pioneers of La Terrepeur. It was not true, as had been reported, that he was a missionary and schoolmaster to the Indians; for no one of the savages who occasionally came into the settlement could be induced to approach the "school".

It was in June that old Scythia became restless and anxious to find her tribe—the wandering Nez Percees.

Rothsay gave his school a vacation and set out with Scythia to find the valley where they were reported to be in camp.

"This valley below, Cora, dear," said Rothsay, interrupting the course of the narrative. "But when we reached it, the Nez Percees had disappeared. A lonely old hunter, who had built this hut, was the only human being in the place, and he was slowly dying, and he would have died alone but for the opportune arrival of old Scythia and myself. He told us that the Nez Percees had crossed the river about two weeks before, and were far on their migration west."

"Old Scythia sat down flat on the floor, drew up her knees, folded her hands upon them, dropped her head, and died as quietly as a tired child falls to sleep."

"Oh!" exclaimed Corona, "how sad it was."

"Yes, it was sad; age, fatigue and disappointment did their work. I buried her body under that pine tree where your Uncle Clarence sat down. The old hunter's struggle with dissolution was longer. He lingered five days. I waited on him until death relieved him, and then laid his body to rest beside old Scythia's. I was then preparing to return to La Terrepeur, when a wandering scout brought me the news of the massacre of the inhabitants and the destruction of the settlement. Since that time, dear Corona, I have lived alone on this mountain. That is all. Come, shall we go down and see your uncle?"

"Yes," said Corona.

And they arose and walked down into the valley.

They soon found the wagon camp of Clarence Rockharrt and his followers.

The horses and mules, which had been unharnessed, watered and fed, were now tethered to the scattered tree trunks and were nosing about under the dried leaves in search of the tender herbage that was still springing in that genial soil beneath the shelter of the fallen foliage. The wagons had been drawn up under cover of the thicket and prepared as sleeping berths.

On the grass was spread a large white damask table cloth, and on that was arranged a neat tea service for three.

Martha was busy at a gypsy fire boiling coffee and broiling venison steaks.

"You are just in time, Rule. How do you do?" exclaimed Mr. Clarence, emerging from among the horses, and coming forward to shake hands with Rothsay as if they had been in the daily habit of meeting for the last four years.

The two men clasped hands cordially.

"I always had a secret conviction that you were living, Rule, and always secretly hoped to meet you again 'somehow, somewhere'; and now my prescience is justified in our meeting to-day."

"Clarence," gravely replied Rothsay, "you ask me no questions, yet now I feel that you are entitled to

some explanation of my strange flight and long sequestration. And I will give it to you to-morrow."

"My dear Rothsay, I have divined much of the mystery, but you may tell me what you like, when you like. And now supper is ready," said Clarence, heartily, as the four servants came up, each with a dish to set on the cloth quite an unnecessary pageantry where one would have been enough, but that they all wanted to see the long-lost man. And with the warmth and freedom of their race they quickly set down their dishes and gathered around the stranger to give him a warm welcome, expressing loudly their surprise and delight in seeing him.

"Dough 'deed I doane wonner at nuffin wot turns up in dis yere new country!" old Martha declared.

Then followed a gay and happy *al fresco* supper.

By the time it was over the sun had set, and the autumn evening air, even in that southern clime, was growing very chilly.

So the three friends arose from the table.

Rothsay and Corona turned to go up the hill. Clarence escorted them, carrying Corona's bag.

They parted at the door of the log cabin.

"I shall have our tent pitched at the foot of the mountain early to-morrow morning, and breakfast prepared. You will come down and join me," said Mr. Clarence as he bade the reunited pair good-night.

The wagon camp did not break up the next day, nor the day after that.

On the third day who should arrive but Lieut. Haught, absent on leave, and come to look up his relations. His meeting with them was a jubilee. His sister wept for joy; his brother-in-law and his uncle would have embraced him if they had expressed their emotions as continental Europeans do; even the negroes almost hugged and kissed him.

On Lieut. Haught's representations and at his persuasions the little camp broke up, and with Rothsay and Cora in company, marched off to Fort Farthermost, where they were cordially received by the commandant and the officers, and where the reunited pair commenced life anew.

My story opened with the marriage and mysterious separation of the newly married pair. It should close with their reunion.

The later life of my young hero belongs to history. It would require a pen more powerful than mine to pursue his career, which was as grand, heroic and romantic as that of any knight, prince, or paladin in the days of old.

His pure name and fame became identified with the rise and progress of a great State in that Southwestern wilderness. Soldier, statesman, patriot, benefactor, all in one, his memory will be honored as long as his country shall last. And yet, perhaps, the crowning glory of his character was his power of self-renunciation—proved in every act of his public life, but shown first, perhaps,

when, to leave the life of one beloved woman free, he renounced not only the hand of his adored bride, but

"The kingdoms of the world and the glory."

THE END

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If there was nothing more about the work to attract especial attention, the account of the meeting of the kings on the historic "field of the cloth of gold" would entitle the story to the most favorable consideration of every reader.

There is really but little pure romance in this story, for the author has taken care to imagine love passages only between those whom history has credited with having entertained the tender passion one for another, and he succeeds in making such lovers as all the world must love.

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"Windsor Castle" is the story of Henry VIII., Catharine, and Anne Boleyn. "Bluff King Hal," although a well-loved monarch, was none too good a one in many ways. Of all his selfishness and unwarrantable acts, none was more discreditable than his divorce from Catharine, and his marriage to the beautiful Anne Boleyn. The King's love was as brief as it was vehement. Jane Seymour, waiting maid on the Queen, attracted him, and Anne Boleyn was forced to the block to make room for her successor. This romance is one of extreme interest to all readers.

HORSESHOE ROBINSON. A tale of the Tory Ascendency in South Carolina in 1780. By John P. Kennedy. Cloth, 12mo. with four illustrations by J. Watson Davis. Price, $1.00.

Among the old favorites in the field of what is known as historical fiction, there are none which appeal to a larger number of Americans than Horseshoe Robinson, and this because it is the only story which depicts with fidelity to the facts the heroic efforts of the colonists in South Carolina to defend their homes against the brutal oppression of the British under such leaders as Cornwallis and Tarleton.

The reader is charmed with the story of love which forms the thread of the tale, and then impressed with the wealth of detail concerning those times. The picture of the manifold sufferings of the people, is never overdrawn, but painted faithfully and honestly by one who spared neither time nor labor in his efforts to present in this charming love story all that price in blood and tears which the Carolinians paid as their share in the winning of the republic.

Take it all in all, "Horseshoe Robinson" is a work which should be found on every book-shelf, not only because it is a most entertaining story, but because of the wealth of valuable information concerning the colonists which it contains. That it has been brought out once more, well illustrated, is something which will give pleasure to thousands who have long desired an opportunity to read the story again, and to the many who have tried vainly in these latter days to procure a copy that they might read it for the first time.

THE PEARL OF ORR'S ISLAND. A story of the Coast of Maine. By Harriet Beecher Stowe. Cloth, 12mo. Illustrated. Price, $1.00.

Written prior to 1862, the "Pearl of Orr's Island" is ever new; a book filled with delicate fancies, such as seemingly array themselves anew each time one reads them. One sees the "sea like an unbroken mirror all around the pine-girt, lonely shores of Orr's Island," and straightway comes "the heavy, hollow moan of the surf on the beach, like the wild angry howl of some savage animal."

Who can read of the beginning of that sweet life, named Mara, which came into this world under the very shadow of the Death angel's wings, without having an intense desire to know how the premature bud blossomed? Again and again one lingers over the descriptions of the character of that baby boy Moses, who came through the tempest, amid the angry billows, pillowed on his dead mother's breast.

There is no more faithful portrayal of New England life than that which Mrs. Stowe gives in "The Pearl of Orr's Island."

BURT'S SERIES of STANDARD FICTION.

THE SPIRIT OF THE BORDER. A Romance of the Early Settlers in the Ohio Valley. By Zane Grey. Cloth. 12mo. with four illustrations by J. Watson Davis. Price, $1.00.

A book rather out of the ordinary is this "Spirit of the Border." The main thread of the story has to do with the work of the Moravian missionaries in the Ohio Valley. Incidentally the reader is given details of the frontier life of those hardy pioneers who broke the wilderness for the planting of this great nation. Chief among these, as a matter of course, is Lewis Wetzel, one of the most peculiar, and at the same time the most admirable of all the brave men who spent their lives battling with the savage foe, that others might dwell in comparative security.

Details of the establishment and destruction of the Moravian "Village of Peace" are given at some length, and with minute description. The efforts to Christianize the Indians are described as they never have been before, and the author has depicted the characters of the leaders of the several Indian tribes with great care, which of itself will be of interest to the student.

By no means least among the charms of the story are the vivid word-pictures of the thrilling adventures, and the intense paintings of the beauties of nature, as seen in the almost unbroken forests.

It is the spirit of the frontier which is described, and one can by it, perhaps, the better understand why men, and women, too, willingly braved every privation and danger that the westward progress of the star of empire might be the more certain and rapid. A love story, simple and tender, runs through the book.

CAPTAIN BRAND, OF THE SCHOONER CENTIPEDE. By Lieut. Henry A. Wise, U.S.N. (Harry Gringo). Cloth, 12mo. with four illustrations by J. Watson Davis. Price, $1.00.

The re-publication of this story will please those lovers of sea yarns who delight in so much of the salty flavor of the ocean as can come through the medium of a printed page, for never has a story of the sea and those "who go down in ships" been written by one more familiar with the scenes depicted.

The one book of this gifted author which is best remembered, and which will be read with pleasure for many years to come, is "Captain Brand," who, as the author states on his title page, was a "pirate of eminence in the West Indies." As a sea story pure and simple, "Captain Brand" has never been excelled, and as a story of piratical life, told without the usual embellishments of blood and thunder, it has no equal.

NICK OF THE WOODS. A story of the Early Settlers of Kentucky. By Robert Montgomery Bird. Cloth, 12mo. with four illustrations by J. Watson Davis. Price, $1.00.

This most popular novel and thrilling story of early frontier life in Kentucky was originally published in the year 1837. The novel, long out of print, had in its day a phenomenal sale, for its realistic presentation of Indian and frontier life in the early days of settlement in the South, narrated in the tale with all the art of a practiced writer. A very charming love romance runs through the story. This new and tasteful edition of "Nick of the Woods" will be certain to make many new admirers fot this enchanting story from Dr. Bird's clever and versatile pen.

GUY FAWKES. A Romance of the Gunpowder Treason. By Wm. Harrison Ainsworth. Cloth, 12mo. with four illustrations by George Cruikshank. Price, $1.00.

The "Gunpowder Plot" was a modest attempt to blow up Parliament, the King and his Counsellors. James of Scotland, then King of England, was weak-minded and extravagant. He hit upon the efficient scheme of extorting money from the people by imposing taxes on the Catholics. In their natural resentment to this extortion, a handful of bold spirits concluded to overthrow the government. Finally the plotters were arrested, and the King put to torture Guy Fawkes and the other prisoners with royal vigor. A very intense love story runs through the entire romance.

TICONDEROGA: A Story of Early Frontier Life in the Mohawk Valley. By G. P. R. James. Cloth, 12mo. with four page illustrations by J. Watson Davis. Price, $1.00.

The setting of the story is decidedly more picturesque than any ever evolved by Cooper: The frontier of New York State, where dwelt an English gentleman, driven from his native home by grief over the loss of his wife, with a son and daughter. Thither, brought by the exigencies of war, comes an English officer, who is readily recognized as that Lord Howe who met his death at Ticonderoga. As a most natural sequence, even amid the hostile demonstrations of both French and Indians, Lord Howe and the young girl find time to make most deliciously sweet love, and the son of the recluse has already lost his heart to the daughter of a great sachem, a dusky maiden whose warrior-father has surrounded her with all the comforts of a civilized life.

The character of Captain Brooks, who voluntarily decides to sacrifice his own life in order to save the son of the Englishman, is not among the least of the attractions of this story, which holds the attention of the reader even to the last page. The tribal laws and folk lore of the different tribes of Indians known as the "Five Nations," with which the story is interspersed, shows that the author gave no small amount of study to the work in question, and nowhere else is it shown more plainly than by the skilful manner in which he has interwoven with his plot the "blood" law, which demands a life for a life, whether it be that of the murderer or one of his race.

A more charming story of mingled love and adventure has never been written than "Ticonderoga."

ROB OF THE BOWL: A Story of the Early Days of Maryland. By John P. Kennedy. Cloth, 12mo. with four page illustrations by J. Watson Davis. Price, $1.00.

It was while he was a member of Congress from Maryland that the noted statesman wrote this story regarding the early history of his native State, and while some critics are inclined to consider "Horse Shoe Robinson" as the best of his works, it is certain that "Rob of the Bowl" stands at the head of the list as a literary production and an authentic exposition of the manners and customs during Lord Baltimore's rule. The greater portion of the action takes place in St. Mary's—the original capital of the State.

As a series of pictures of early colonial life in Maryland, "Rob of the Bowl" has no equal, and the book, having been written by one who had exceptional facilities for gathering material concerning the individual members of the settlements in and about St. Mary's, is a most valuable addition to the history of the State.

The story is full of splendid action, with a charming love story, and a plot that never loosens the grip of its interest to its last page.

BY BERWEN BANKS. By Allen Raine.

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